United Nations A/59/PV.14

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 September 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: It is with great pleasure that I bring warm greetings from the Government and people of Kiribati on whose behalf I have the honour to address the Assembly today.

Before I begin, I would like to extend our congratulations to Mr. Jean Ping on his election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We have every confidence in his able leadership to guide the work of the Assembly and to deliver conclusive outcomes. He has our full support and cooperation in carrying out his work. I wish also to thank the President's predecessor for the excellent work he has done in steering the work of the Assembly during the past year. My congratulations also go to the Secretary-General for his sterling leadership of our Organization during these trying times and for rising commendably to the challenge.

We gather again this year amidst the reality of daunting challenges that continue to confront us as individual nations and as a global community. The ongoing conflicts in Iraq and other parts of the world, the scourge of terrorism and the existence of nuclear arsenals, accelerated environmental degradation and the threat of global warming and sea-level rise, hunger and poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other non-communicable diseases, the marginalization of the least developed countries within the global economy and underdevelopment, all continue to pose major challenges that our Organization must address today.

Those challenges cast a dark shadow over the commitments made by world leaders at the Millennium Summit held here in New York four years ago, pledging to work collectively to maintain peace and security, to eliminate poverty and to promote development for the benefit of all mankind in the new millennium.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continue to threaten international security. We must be unified in our approach and address those challenges effectively by strengthening multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements and through closer regional and international cooperation. Kiribati supports all non-proliferation efforts and in that respect is party to, among others, the Treaty on the

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Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We commend and support the work of the international community and efforts taken at the national, regional and international levels to respond to the challenges of terrorism, recognizing the need for international solidarity in addressing that increasing global threat.

Kiribati is committed to the global fight against terrorism. Terrorism knows no boundaries and we cannot claim immunity from it. Indeed, as a small island developing State we have very little capacity to develop any effective countermeasures and are therefore especially vulnerable to terrorism.

We acknowledge the importance of complying with United Nations resolutions and international security arrangements that have been adopted in the fight against terrorism. While we cannot afford to be complacent in our efforts in that regard, it must be recognized that the requirements for compliance with those resolutions and arrangements do pose enormous challenges for countries such as Kiribati. Our limited resources and technical capacity are already committed to providing for the basic and essential social and economic needs of our rapidly growing population, thus placing severe constraints on our ability to make progress in compliance. I would like to note, however, that, with technical assistance from our development partners, we have made progress in enacting important legislation relating to terrorism and transnational crime. We expect to make further progress on compliance with the counter-terrorism requirements shortly.

The progress made so far has revolved primarily around the introduction of legislation. We recognize that this is just the beginning of the process. The implementation and enforcement of the legislation enacted will pose an immense challenge. In this respect, we will continue to count on the assistance and support of the international community.

We note with deep regret and concern the loss of life and devastation to property caused by the recent series of hurricanes affecting the Caribbean and the Atlantic coast of the United States. We offer our deep sympathy to those affected by those natural disasters.

The adverse impact of climate change and sea-level rise is, indeed, a critical security issue for the global community in this new millennium, especially for low-lying island States like Kiribati. That issue must take centre stage with other international security issues. We urge the international community to agree on a unified global response in order to better protect the environment, in the same way that the international community is being encouraged to respond to terrorism and other threats to global security. Our inability as a global community to agree on a unified stand on climate change and sea-level rise is very disappointing indeed, and we deplore the notion that economic growth must take precedence over environmental issues at any cost. Our very existence as a State — indeed, the existence all States similar to Kiribati — is at stake if such thinking continues to prevail.

I would like at this juncture to express our gratitude to the many countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol and to appeal to those that have not to do so as a matter of urgency. We have demonstrated remarkable solidarity in the fight against global terrorism. Can we not demonstrate the same solidarity in the fight against climate change and sea-level rise?

Regional cooperation has been a very effective mechanism in addressing the many challenges faced by countries in our region. Regional cooperation has enabled many Pacific countries to meet some of the counter-terrorism requirements. Regional cooperation has also enabled us to effectively address emerging issues confronting our region; the outstanding success of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands is a clear demonstration of that.

We in the Pacific are confident of our ability to steer a course for the future. We have approved work to commence on a Pacific plan that will promote collective action in the areas of security, good governance, economic growth and sustainable development. We envisage that the Pacific plan will result in the delivery of tangible benefits to our respective peoples and communities.

We recognize the need for, and welcome, strengthened cooperation and the development of closer linkages and partnerships between the United Nations and its specialized agencies and other organizations, including the Pacific Islands Forum. Such linkages and partnerships can only result in the more effective, coordinated and harmonized delivery of assistance to member countries.

Making progress with regard to the development aspirations of our peoples is a high — if not the highest — priority for many of us who are here today. Our national policy objective is to achieve the

equitable distribution of development benefits to all our peoples, based on the principles of good governance. We are committed to the Millennium Declaration and are on track in our national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The Goals have been integrated and mainstreamed into our national development strategy. We are committed to pursuing those goals as the basis of sustainable development. In this connection, I would like to express our appreciation to all our development partners, who, over the years, have contributed meaningfully to the realization of our development aspirations.

While we are grateful for the assistance extended by our development partners, there is scope for us to achieve more for our peoples — and to do so without development assistance. Kiribati has a large exclusive economic zone that has an abundant fisheries resource. Those resources are presently being harvested by vessels from distant-water fishing nations under license arrangements. However, the return from these licensing arrangements is negligible, at only around 5 per cent of the landed value of the catch.

Naturally, we would like to see greater returns from that resource. Our ability to achieve sustainable economic development depends on it. Accordingly, we urge the flag States of those fishing interests to encourage their industries to explore the mutual benefits to be gained from collaboration with resource owners in establishing on-shore facilities that will add value to the commodity. We believe that such a model will also result in easing the pressure on fish stocks and ensure conservation of the resource for the sustainable benefit of mankind.

The entry into force in June this year of the Western and Central Pacific Tuna Convention represents a major development in the management of the western and central Pacific tuna fishery.

In this age of rapid globalization, advances in information technology and trade liberalization, it is regrettable that, while some are reaping the full benefits of those advances and developments, significantly more remain on the fringes. The reality is that a large proportion of the world's population, most of whom live in developing countries, continue to live in poverty and are marginalized in trading arrangements and market access opportunities. The promise of globalization and open trading as a positive force for economic growth, and social progress continues to elude the many. Much work needs to be done to ensure that the many also enjoy the benefits of globalization.

Kiribati supports the findings of the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. We urge that the findings of the report be taken into consideration and incorporated into the work of the Assembly, especially for the 2005 high-level review of the outcome of the Millennium Summit.

We welcome the United Nations support for the convening, early next year in Mauritius, of the International Meeting for the 10-Year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Like other small island developing States, we attach great importance to that review. With the continued support and commitment of our development partners to the process, we can be assured of important outcomes that will go a long way in making a real difference to the quality of life for our peoples.

We share the concerns of the international community about the spread of HIV/AIDS and its devastating impact as both a health crisis and a development concern. We welcome the recent developments in the search for affordable drugs for HIV/AIDS victims in developing countries. We encourage greater collaboration on HIV/AIDS research and the mobilization of resources for prevention activities and for better medical care for affected patients.

We believe in the continuing relevance and importance of the role of the United Nations and its ability to respond to the challenges of our contemporary world. In this regard, Kiribati welcomes and fully supports the efforts to reform this Organization to enable it to better respond to the challenges of this era.

Given the crucial role of the Security Council in the promotion of international peace and security and the importance we attach to that issue, we see the necessity for Security Council reform, including the expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council. Expansion is required to better reflect the realities of our world today. We note that some countries, including Japan, have consistently committed substantial resources towards the maintenance of global peace and security, and we believe that they should be accorded permanent membership on the Security Council.

We attach great importance to our membership in this noble Organization, and we reaffirm our commitment to upholding the noble values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter epitomizes our hope for achieving justice and equality and the safeguarding and promotion of fundamental human rights of all peoples. Within that context, we believe that the exclusionary principles applied to Taiwan in its bid for United Nations membership go against the very values and objectives of the Charter that we all strive to uphold. In this era of tension and conflict we should discard the present exclusionary practices and adopt a more embracing environment where all countries willing and able to contribute to the international community's efforts to promote world peace and stability are welcomed as equal partners. Taiwan has made and continues to make notable contributions to the development of many developing countries and has the capacity to contribute constructively to the good work of the United Nations. It is therefore regrettable that the desire of the 23 million people of Taiwan to again become a part of that global community of nations continues to be rejected.

The challenges that confront us at this point in time are indeed daunting, but they are not insurmountable. With renewed commitments and with a common resolve to work in close cooperation and in support of each other, we can succeed in creating a more secure, a more prosperous and a more just world for all in this millennium.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Fabio Berardi, Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Berardi (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to express my great and profound satisfaction for the recent release of four hostages kidnapped in Iraq, among them a young woman whose mother is a San Marino national engaged in humanitarian activities for the Iraqi civilian population. On behalf of the Government of San Marino I wish wholeheartedly to thank the Government of Italy, which played an active role in the release, as well as all of those who made that release possible.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino I wish to congratulate Mr. Jean Ping, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I also wish to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the total commitment and determination he showed in his work.

United Nations activities have thus far been crucial in reducing conflicts between States. However, although the number of international conflicts has decreased, mankind is still facing new threats, which can only be tackled multilaterally. So that it can continue to serve the international community, the United Nations should be given more effective tools to enhance mediation and peaceful settlement of disputes, preventive control, verification, planning and use of sanctions, in order to prevent the outbreak of warfare and to promote disarmament and arms control. Moreover, the United Nations must receive adequate support so that it can better meet the growing number of requests for peacekeeping operations in various regions of the world. In that context, we appreciate the results obtained so far, but the process requires a stronger will on behalf of our Governments to comply with international rules and implement a concrete and effective cooperation regime.

In line with relevant international standards, San Marino has recently passed a special law to combat terrorism and associated crimes. It is also actively cooperating with the two United Nations anti-terrorism committees established pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1373 (2001).

Since the tragic 11 September attacks on the United States of America, the international community has become aware of the seriousness of the threat of terrorism. Recurrent dramatic events worldwide, the violent attacks perpetrated in Iraq — not only against soldiers but also civilians, the media and, most recently, even volunteers of non-governmental organization humanitarian missions — force our countries to realize the full scope of this phenomenon and its proliferation, and the need to search for a

common and effective response based on a stronger joint commitment.

The horrifying terrorist act carried out in Ossetia against hundreds of innocents and so many children demonstrates that the widespread strategy of fear, hatred and devastation is humanly and ethically unacceptable.

San Marino once again condemns any form of terrorism, the most serious and impending threat to peace, for which there can be neither explanation nor justification. We support the search for constructive solutions that promote dialogue and mutual understanding among peoples of different cultures and religions with a view to the dissemination of an increasingly shared culture of peace and cooperation that will help to reject violence and oppression.

The Government of San Marino avails itself of this opportunity to express its special thanks to the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, who contributed to the establishment of an Iraqi interim Government, and renews its support to Prime Minister Allawi for the forthcoming democratic elections scheduled for January 2005. The elections will surely be a milestone for the Iraqi people in the exercise of their sovereignty.

We trust that the international community will help to achieve national reconciliation in Iraq, on the basis of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) of 8 June, with regard to independence, security and legality. Despite the tragic attack on its headquarters in Baghdad last year, the United Nations can continue to play a key role in Iraq, especially at a time when the situation has become extremely complex and delicate, particularly from a human and political point of view.

Another major source of concern and disappointment for San Marino is the persistence of the Middle East crisis, which remains unsolved despite the efforts made by the United Nations to encourage dialogue and indispensable mediation.

To achieve the ultimate goal of legitimate, peaceful and safe coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, the political process outlined in the road map and supported by the international community still appears to be the only viable solution. Therefore, on behalf of the San Marino Government, I reiterate, as I recently expressed to both the Foreign Ministers of Israel and Palestine, our sincere hope that such a process will soon resume.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, the position of the Republic of San Marino is well known. We favour an increase in the number of non-permanent members, in the most appropriate way, and of the gradual restriction of the right of veto, with a view to its eventual elimination. Indeed, the increase of the number of permanent seats and the extension of the right of veto would entail, in our view, a greater injustice through the perpetuation of privileges, the consolidation of discrimination within United Nations Member States, and it would limit the power of the General Assembly to elect the most suitable candidates in accordance with differing historical periods.

The Government of San Marino fully endorses General Assembly resolution 58/316, adopted on 1 July 2004, relating to the revitalization of the work of the Assembly itself. Similarly, we are satisfied with resolution 58/314, adopted on the same day, granting the Holy See wider and more incisive prerogatives as an Observer.

The safeguarding of human rights and fundamental freedoms, together with full respect for freedom, equality and democracy, have always been essential elements in the history of San Marino, and represent the very basis of its 1,700-year existence. These issues continue to regulate relations with other States and with international organizations. It is in this spirit that I express my best wishes once again to Ms. Louise Arbour, the recently appointed United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

San Marino firmly believes in the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and has recently supported the draft ICC/United Nations relationship agreement and the setting up of an ICC liaison office in New York.

My country remains strongly committed to the campaign for the universal abolition of the death penalty, and it has recently ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on the abolition of the death penalty.

The recent signature and ratification by San Marino of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been followed by a law granting full gender equality in the transmission of San Marino citizenship to children. Moreover, the Government has subsequently established for the first time in history a Ministry for Equal Opportunity.

As 2004 is the International Year of the Family, we hope that as many countries as possible will follow San Marino in signing the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which are on the involvement of children in armed conflict; and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In addition, San Marino recently ratified the 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, thus starting a wide debate domestically on joint parental custody in case of parental separation.

Equal attention is being paid by my country to the most disadvantaged members of our families and societies and to the issue of the increasing ageing of the population, observed especially in developed countries. Against this background, our Government has been working to strengthen existing support infrastructures and assistance to families.

We sincerely hope soon to reach an agreement on the final text of an international convention on the promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of disabled people.

The President took the Chair.

San Marino also wishes to underline the relevance of the objectives set forth in the Monterrey Consensus, especially considering that 14 million people, including 6 million children, are still dying of starvation. One billion people have no access to potable water, and 3 billion human beings do not receive adequate medical care.

Yet, poverty eradication cannot be implemented without respect for the ecosystem. In this regard, a valuable instrument to develop and protect our environment is, in our opinion, the Convention to Combat Desertification, recently ratified by San Marino, along with a view to actively participate in the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015.

In accordance with the objectives of health for all, San Marino recently ratified the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and reiterates its support to the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, with the awareness that the spreading of new epidemics requires stronger international cooperation.

On this important occasion, year after year meeting and exchanging views as representatives of our respective Governments, we express deeper and deeper concern and frustration vis-à-vis the many threats severely affecting humankind and possibly jeopardizing our common future.

Yet, the ideals and principles we reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration are still the highest benchmark to guide our efforts, both within our own States and within the work of the United Nations. We need to instil hope and actualize our universal aspirations to peace, cooperation and development.

To this end, let me express my best and warmest wishes to you, Mr. President, to the Secretary-General, to all United Nations officials and to all our countries.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Royal Highness Princess Hajah Masna, Special Envoy of Brunei Darussalam.

Princess Hajah Masna (Brunei Darussalam): I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation during your tenure of office. I also express my appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his leadership and tireless work over the past year.

I also extend my appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan and his staff for their continuous hard work and commitment. The Secretary-General's personal dedication and leadership in the work of the United Nations, especially his efforts for global peace and stability, are an inspiration to us all. Those efforts are all the more necessary in the light of what many of us here have described as disturbing world developments.

On behalf of the Government of Brunei Darussalam, I wish to extend our sympathy and condolences to the Governments and the peoples of the United States and the Caribbean countries for the devastation caused by the recent hurricanes.

Since its establishment 59 years ago, the United Nations has achieved much, especially in ensuring international peace and security and creating a stable and prosperous world. There has not been a world war since its inception, and it has had a positive impact in many fields, such as peacekeeping, the eradication of various diseases and socio-economic development. We highly commend those efforts and value the sacrifices of those involved.

However, the achievements of the United Nations have been undermined by increasingly complex international developments. In his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), the Secretary-

General stated that the United Nations has been through an extraordinarily challenging year. It was the year in which the Iraq war brought the debate on the United Nations role into sharper focus.

Moreover, our Organization is still preoccupied with many unresolved issues. Among others, the Palestinian conflict remains a grave concern. Terrorism and weapons of mass destruction continue to pose serious threats. At the same time, poverty, environmental degradation and the spread of disease cause further misery and hardship for millions. Those issues demand our effective response, which will ultimately define the relevance of our Organization. We therefore need more than ever a strong and effective United Nations, one that is able to promote world peace and development. It must also give hope and purpose to the people who increasingly look to it to improve their lives.

However, the United Nations cannot do all that on its own. For it to carry out its responsibilities effectively, Member States need to work together, contribute resources and honour their commitments. As we work collectively to meet today's complex challenges, we must continue to adhere to the principles enshrined in the Charter. All the various conventions and treaties, from nuclear non-proliferation to environmental conservation, are manifestations of how we and the United Nations aim to protect our people and ensure that they can live to their fullest potential. In that regard, I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General for his address to the General Assembly, in which he emphasized the importance of those issues. It is through our reaffirmation of the Charter's principles that we can effectively uphold human ideals, enhance security and stability and promote sustainable development.

Without doubt, the United Nations is the most universal international body for providing a multilateral response. We need to reform the United Nations urgently so that it can be better equipped. In that regard, Brunei Darussalam fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen and revitalize the United Nations. In particular, we welcome the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which he has set up to address this.

We believe that United Nations reform should be comprehensive and include an expanded and more representative Security Council, a revitalized role for the General Assembly and better coordination among United Nations agencies. The interest a number of countries have shown in serving as permanent members of the Security Council is a clear indication of the desire for change.

Next year, the Assembly will consider the report of the High-level Panel and the recommendations of the Secretary-General. I realize how difficult it is to find a solution that is acceptable to all, but it is incumbent upon Member States to make a difference by implementing the much-needed reforms. Thus, a willingness to find a balanced set of proposals will be necessary. We look forward to the report, which, hopefully, will make the necessary bold and realistic proposals in order to end the decade-long debate on this issue.

Next year will be a critical time for us as we review implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. To ensure that the commitments set forth in the Millennium Declaration are implemented on schedule, we must act without delay. As for Brunei Darussalam, we are doing our part to achieve those goals.

As we begin to look into our agenda for this session, we must remain focused on the issues affecting many innocent lives in Palestine. Recent developments, such as the illegal construction of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territories, must be stopped and reversed. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the subsequent General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 reflect the international community's overwhelming support for ending injustice in the occupied territories.

The concerned parties must do all they can to prevent the situation from deteriorating. They must make serious efforts to honour their obligations as outlined in the road map. It is critical that progress should be made so that we can find a comprehensive, just and durable solution to that longstanding conflict.

The situation in other parts of the Middle East, such as Iraq, has created enormous anxiety. We acknowledge the central role of the United Nations and the efforts of other countries and parties in addressing the political and humanitarian dimensions of the problems.

In our region, we recognize that the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula has a serious impact on the peace, stability and security of the Asian-Pacific region. We appreciate the role of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States in

seeking a solution through dialogue in the six-party talks. It is important that all parties concerned continue their efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the issue.

We are deeply saddened by the horrifying scenes of harm inflicted upon innocent people by terrorist acts. Brunei Darussalam would like to convey its great sympathy to the Governments and the peoples of the countries in Asia, the Middle East and Europe that have been targeted by terrorist attacks in the past year. We strongly condemn those atrocious acts.

Terrorism affects all of us — women and men, adults and children, developed and developing countries. It knows no boundaries. It has no ethnic, racial or religious affinities. Despite concerted efforts, devastating incidents this year have heightened the threats and challenges posed by terrorism. Those acts are becoming more complex, and our fight against them is far from over. It is therefore important to address this problem in a comprehensive manner. In doing so, we need to identify this problem's real source and root causes. This is what we have to bear in mind if we are to achieve a long-term solution. At the same time, we must not allow terrorists to divide us and undermine our determination to fight this menace collectively.

The challenges that we face require us to move forward to ensure that the United Nations continues to play its pivotal role. I am confident, Mr. President, that under your able leadership, the General Assembly will achieve success and make the decisions necessary to fulfil the hopes and expectations of the peoples it represents. Our tasks are great, but so also are our capabilities when we all work together.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Nepal.

Mr. Mahat (Nepal): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election to preside over the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in the discharge of your important duties. Allow me to also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian R. Hunte, Minister for External Affairs of Saint Lucia, for his outstanding leadership in the Assembly's last session. Our full appreciation goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his invaluable and wise stewardship of the United Nations.

I also wish to express, on behalf of His Majesty's Government and the people of Nepal, our sincere condolences to the Governments, countries and peoples that have suffered the consequences of hurricanes and terrorist attacks in recent weeks and months.

We live in one of the most turbulent periods since the Second World War. The end of the cold war unleashed forces of democracy and economic openness, and the revolution in science, and technology has converted the world into a global village by shrinking distances and increasing connectivity. In tandem with this came many negative consequences. Internal conflicts have proliferated and populations have been displaced. International terrorism has increased. Globalization has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Poverty, ignorance, disease and injustice have persisted and even worsened for the majority of humanity. Transnational crimes have spread their wings. No country is immune from the impact of these huge problems facing humanity today. Addressing these problems is a challenge that requires collective action by the international community in a spirit of multilateralism. The United Nations has the legitimacy and mandate to promote multilateral solutions to the shared problems of our time.

Indeed, the United Nations embodies all of humanity's shared dreams and its hopes for peace, security and development. Nepal has abiding faith in the principles and objectives enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and we recognize the central role of the United Nations in the pursuit of those shared dreams.

The emerging international situation is fraught with a multitude of challenges. Internal conflicts have afflicted countries from Iraq to Burundi and from Haiti to the Sudan. Terrorism has become a global menace, casting a dark shadow over the lives of millions of people around the globe. Deadly weapons pose a constant threat to the safety of human beings and the very existence of human civilization.

By all accounts, the situation in Iraq is highly volatile and extremely dangerous. The Nepalese people have yet to overcome their revulsion over the brutal killing of 12 innocent Nepalese hostages on 31 August in that country. We strongly condemn this dastardly crime committed by the terrorists. It is our fervent hope that the Iraqi people will be able to improve their security environment, hold the scheduled elections on

time and live in a free, secure, democratic and prosperous Iraq.

The Middle East is caught in a cycle of violence. To break this cycle, both Israel and Palestine will have to exercise maximum restraint and engage in fruitful dialogue to build the mutual confidence critical for implementing the Quartet-endorsed road map, which offers a viable and durable two-State solution. Nepal supports the road map and views the Israeli plan to pull out of Gaza as a positive step.

Though the security situation has improved over time, Afghanistan is far from secure, and its reconstruction is far from satisfactory. The world community must do more to provide security to the entire country, hold free and fair elections and accelerate the speed of its reconstruction and development.

Nepal supports United Nations efforts to bring peace and normalcy to Haiti, Burundi, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. We are proud to be part of United Nations efforts in our own humble way in those countries by deploying our troops. The world community ought to sustain those efforts and help those countries in their rebuilding and reconstruction endeavours.

Nepal's track record is a testimony to its unflinching commitment to United Nations peacekeeping operations. So far, over 45,000 Nepalese peacekeepers have served in various missions in an outstanding manner, and 47 of them have sacrificed their precious lives in the service of peace and humanity. At the moment, nearly 2,500 Nepalese blue helmets are deployed in 12 peacekeeping missions around the world.

Nepal appreciates the United Nations help in bridging the equipment gaps for our deployment. We urge the United Nations to enrich and widen the scope of consultations with troop-contributing countries, including in the areas of mission planning and pre-deployment preparations. We urge the United Nations to give greater opportunities to Nepalese nationals in management positions in the Secretariat and in field missions.

As we remain committed to peacekeeping and willing to bring our experience to the table, Nepal has sought a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2007-2008, after a gap of 19 years. I take this opportunity to appeal to Member States to give us the privilege of their support in the election to be held in 2006.

It is our firm belief that the international community must look beyond the immediate conflicts and seek to build a strong foundation for durable peace by pursuing disarmament, development and the rule of law.

Nepal is deeply concerned by the setback in the disarmament realm. Of course, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is very important to keeping such weapons from rogue elements. No durable peace will be possible without concerted efforts for disarmament, particularly of nuclear weapons, as they are the greatest threat to human civilization. It is regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament has had no programme of work for the last several years. That body must be allowed to work on a coherent strategy leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner.

We reiterate our support to nuclear-weapon-free zones and to keeping outer space free of such weapons. The international community should also work together to strengthen controls over small arms and light weapons in order to prevent their abuse by non-State actors.

Regional centres for peace and disarmament are instrumental in building confidence among nations. Nepal is eager to relocate to Kathmandu the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific at the earliest possible time. We are prepared to sign the necessary agreements, consistent with the prevailing diplomatic practices and provisions of the other two regional centres. We also want the Kathmandu process revived without delay.

International peace and security will continue to elude us until we address the root causes of conflicts: namely, poverty, ignorance, disease, exclusion and injustice. Most of the conflicts around the world today, which have regional and global consequences, are rooted in those sad human conditions. It is imperative that we address those conditions collectively for the shared benefit of humankind as a whole.

Today, more than a billion people live in absolute poverty. Millions of people remain illiterate. Preventable diseases are taking a huge toll on children, and HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are decimating entire societies, particularly in Africa. Growing populations have caused environmental

degradation. Racial, cultural and wealth-related divisions have often been sources of exclusion, intolerance and injustice. Poverty has forced many to migrate, and crimes have flourished in those sad conditions.

There is no doubt that the developing countries have the primary responsibility for their own economic development and social progress. They need to take measures to reform their policies and institutions and create a climate in which enterprise, innovation and development can flourish. Most of those countries have been trying to do that on their own initiative and to live up to their side of the pledges undertaken in various global compacts.

But their development partners also have their obligations to meet under various global compacts, because developing countries, given the mammoth challenges they face, cannot grapple with them and meet the Millennium Development Goals without enhanced assistance from their development partners.

The development partners should meet the agreed official development assistance targets and provide greater debt relief to indebted countries. Indeed, although official development assistance flows have increased since 2002, they remain way below the additional $50 billion per year that is required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Debt repayment is eating up a large chunk of the resources of developing countries, and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative has yet to cover all least developed countries.

In the long run, fair globalization on a level playing field and open markets will help reduce poverty, increase employment and lift the standard of living in developing nations. The development partners, therefore, should dismantle their agricultural subsidies and open their markets to goods and labour from the South. They should also offer assistance to build capacities to attract and absorb foreign direct investment and to remove supply-side constraints, especially in least developed nations. The least developed countries — the most marginalized — need more generous assistance and market access, as agreed to in the Brussels Programme of Action, to break the vicious circle of poverty and join the global economy. Our studies have shown that Nepal will not be able to meet most Millennium Development Goals without such targeted measures from its development partners.

Their geographical bottleneck and distance from the main corridors of commerce handicap landlocked developing countries. We urge the transit and development partners to implement the Almaty Programme of Action and to overcome their difficulties.

Though Nepal joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) last year, most least developed countries remain outside the multilateral trade framework. We call on the members of the WTO to facilitate quick and concessionary memberships for those countries. Nepal also urges the international community to change the international financial architecture so as to give a voice to the small and weak.

Nepal believes that democracy, human rights and the rule of law will have to go hand in hand with peace and development to achieve overall progress in a country. It is heartening that more people in the world enjoy democracy and freedom today than ever before.

Sadly, however, conflicts and poverty have driven millions of people from their homes and countries. Conflicts, together with criminal gangs, have also violated the rule of law and peoples' human rights.

New democracies should learn from each other's experiences in consolidating democratic institutions and values, and the world community should join hands to fight transnational crime. The rule of law should apply not only in domestic situations but also throughout the international community.

There are 17 million refugees around the world — a staggering number. Many more millions of persons are internally displaced. In many areas, those people live in fear and under appalling conditions. Children are deprived of a decent education, and adults lack jobs and economic opportunities. In some cases, whole generations have grown up in refugee camps, struggling to find their identity.

The world community has an obligation to provide humanitarian assistance to such needy people and to help them resettle once they have returned home.

Nearly 100,000 Bhutanese refugees have been living in camps in eastern Nepal for over a decade. Our bilateral efforts to find a negotiated settlement with Bhutan have been slow and halting. Even the refugees who have been verified by a joint team have yet to go back home. Other refugees are waiting for joint verification.

For generations, Nepal and Bhutan have remained close friends and have respected each other. The presence of Bhutanese refugees on our soil is an avoidable irritant. Therefore, we earnestly hope that the process of verification can be expedited, that verified refugees can be repatriated in a time-bound manner, and that returnees will be able to enjoy their human rights and to live in safety, dignity and honour in their own country.

Obviously, Nepal does not have the capacity to take care of those refugees, though we have let them stay on humanitarian grounds. Hence, we call on the international community, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to continue its support until the refugees are able to go back home and fully resettle there.

Our situation has become even more difficult due to the armed violence launched in 1996 by the so-called Maoists. That violent movement began just when democracy was taking root and economic growth was accelerating owing to policy reforms. The Maoists have brutalized people and destroyed private homes and public infrastructure worth billions of rupees. They have been abducting children and recruiting them as child soldiers. They have continued to defy our call to respects schools as zones of peace. They are engaged in extortion and in the intimidation and killing of innocent civilians.

This notwithstanding, His Majesty's Government has been sincerely seeking a results-oriented dialogue to find a political settlement. At the same time, the Government has an obligation to protect the lives of people and to safeguard private property and public infrastructure by strengthening security. The Government deeply appreciates the moral and material support our friends have been providing us in the fight against the violence.

In that context, we sincerely appreciate the interest expressed by the Secretary-General in the situation in Nepal, and his readiness to help the Government's efforts towards peace. The four-party coalition Government, with its broad mandate, is working seriously to initiate the peace process in Nepal. We are confident that we will be able to resolve the problem by ourselves.

Even in the midst of this difficulty, His Majesty's Government is committed to protecting the freedoms and human rights of citizens. The National Human Rights Commission monitors the human rights situation in the country, and a three-year National Human Rights Action Plan has been launched to implement our human rights commitments.

We have been seeking technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as concerns the capacity-building of the National Human Rights Commission. The Human Rights Promotion Centre has been established to ensure inter-departmental coordination and the supervision of human rights issues.

The United Nations is the pivot of multilateralism that is imperative to address the complex challenges of our time. Nepal supports the ongoing efforts for United Nations reform, including those aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Priority should be accorded to enhancing the role of the United Nations in the area of economic and social development. Security Council reform has become an important issue for the international community. Nepal has consistently supported the expansion of the Council and reform of its methods of work, so as to make it more representative, transparent and democratic.

In that context, the aspirations of some Member States — mainly India, Japan, Germany and Brazil — merit serious consideration for permanent membership in the Security Council. At the same time, there is urgent need to expand the Council's non-permanent membership to ensure greater participation of small Member States.

Nepal hopes the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change appointed by the Secretary-General will come up with recommendations that could culminate in tangible reforms consistent with the present realities of the world. The high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly at the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations will be a landmark event that should make a great leap forward on a number of outstanding issues and expedite implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

This fall, Nepal is organizing the Second World Buddhist Summit in Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha and a world heritage site in Nepal. We need support and participation from our friends the Member States to make the conference a success and to revive in New York the international committee for the development of Lumbini, which we are planning to do soon.

To conclude, the dawn of the new millennium offers us both opportunities for and challenges to

revitalizing the United Nations and strengthening multilateralism. As an active Member State, Nepal will do its best to contribute to the efforts of the United Nations in order to attain the shared goals of peace and prosperity for all.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Andrei Stratan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Stratan (Republic of Moldova): At the outset, I would like to say that I feel very honoured and privileged to participate for the first time in the work of the General Assembly and to represent the Republic of Moldova at this rostrum.

On behalf of the Moldovan delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your well deserved election. I am confident that your vast experience and diplomatic skills will help the Assembly at the current session to fulfil its important tasks.

I join other speakers in expressing our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, for the dedicated and effective manner in which he guided the work of the previous session.

This has indeed been a difficult year for the Organization, with serious crises occurring in various parts of the world. Increasingly, the international community is faced with conflicts within States, the painful manifestations of which have been seen in conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, the North Caucasus and elsewhere.

We are all preoccupied by the implications and consequences of the crisis in Iraq. The Republic of Moldova considers that the United Nations should be engaged in a more consistent way in helping that country to stabilize its internal situation and to embark on the path towards recovery, development and democracy.

Earlier, in Spain and Turkey and, most recently, in the Russian Federation, we have seen how terrorism — the scourge of the twenty-first century — indiscriminately strikes the innocent, including children. We strongly believe that terrorist acts must be considered crimes against humanity. The Republic of Moldova strongly condemns all terrorist acts, for which there can be no excuse or justification. We pay homage to the victims of that violence.

Precisely due to the challenges faced, the Republic of Moldova fully supports the ongoing reform process of the United Nations system. A key aspect of that process is the reform of the Security Council. Too often, that principal organ has been accused of failures in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is therefore essential to make it more efficient in the discharge of its primary responsibility. In our view, the efficiency of the Security Council can be achieved by improving its representativeness, legitimacy, transparency and accountability and by restricting the right of veto to issues of substance, as provided for by the United Nations Charter.

The Republic of Moldova shares the view that the reform of the United Nations system will be successful only if the reform of the Security Council is followed by the reform of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. We support the momentum created for revitalizing the Assembly and strengthening the coordinating functions of the Economic and Social Council in the social and economic fields. Effective coordination among the three main bodies is essential if we want to address comprehensively the urgent problems of today's world.

In the new circumstances, the United Nations should continue to improve its capacity in the field of peacekeeping, which is an important instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security. We support actions aimed at enhancing the United Nations rapid deployment capabilities through its standby arrangements. I would like to mention that Moldova has committed itself to contribute troops to the United Nations Standby Arrangements System through yesterday's signing at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of a formal document in that regard. The Republic of Moldova is already present in United Nations peacekeeping efforts, with military observers and staff officers in United Nations missions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. We are determined to continue to support United Nations activities in this area.

It is crucial to further strengthen the United Nations anti-terrorist legal framework. The Republic of Moldova fully supports the current efforts to conclude a convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism and a comprehensive international convention on international terrorism.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his many initiatives to make the Organization more effective. The creation of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change is another important step in that direction. Like other Member States, the Republic of Moldova looks forward to concrete recommendations from the Panel on how to tackle

contemporary threats, including new ones such as intra-State conflicts, terrorism and separatism.

We cannot realistically expect to win the war against international terrorism as long as regional and internal conflicts remain unsolved and their root causes not properly addressed. Recently, terrorism has increasingly been merging with separatism. Many terrorists and international criminals have found a safe haven in the regions affected by internal conflicts and secessionist tendencies.

In this context, I would like to add my voice to those who have repeatedly warned in recent years of the danger posed by aggressive separatism. Separatism provides fertile ground for various extremist forces and terrorist groups. It has become one of the main sources of internal conflicts and regional instability. To ignore it would have tragic consequences for numerous countries of a multi-ethnic composition.

Regretfully, separatism continues to be the main obstacle to consolidating the independence and statehood of the Republic of Moldova. Over the years, the Republic of Moldova has systematically informed the relevant international organizations of the danger that the political conflict in its eastern region poses to regional and international peace and security. The settlement of the conflict has become the country's absolute priority. The initiatives put forward by the Republic of Moldova in recent years reflect the determination and political will of Moldovan authorities to resolve this political conflict peacefully, on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. In particular, I would like to underline the initiative of the President of the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Vladimir Voronin, on the establishment of the Joint Constitutional Commission charged with drafting a new constitution.

Despite the constructive approach by Moldovan authorities in their dialogue with the self-appointed Transdniestrian leaders and other participants in the multilateral framework of negotiations, developments have demonstrated the inefficiency of these negotiations. It has also become obvious that the separatist leaders do not sincerely wish for the country's reintegration. In this regard, I should mention, among other things, the recent closure of Moldovan schools that use Latin script, the inhumane treatment of children and ethnic discrimination.

This region remains an area rife with the illegal manufacture and traffick of arms. Given the porousness of the Transdniestrian section of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, there are no guarantees that the illegally manufactured or trafficked armaments will not reach other conflicts zones in the future.

We are also deeply concerned about the human rights situation in the area controlled by separatist forces. The separatist regime has systematically violated most human rights, including the right of association, the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture, freedom of movement and, especially, the right to education. All of these human rights violations hinder the democratization process within the region.

At the same time, we have encountered a biased attitude on the part of the involved parties, reflected in the support for smuggling and in the obvious violations of existing bilateral and international agreements. We deem it necessary to modify the components of the peacekeeping mechanism and to replace it with a new one under an international mandate.

Considering that the interests of regional stability and security require an objective and impartial approach, it is necessary to ensure full respect for international law and democratic standards. More importantly, any geopolitical and geo-economic interest in maintaining the status-quo needs to be abandoned. Strict implementation of the decisions taken at the 1999 Istanbul Summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe would harmoniously fit such an approach.

Also, as has already been mentioned during the current debate, we must exclude the practice of applying double standards when dealing with internal conflicts and the means for their settlement.

The reintegration of the country and consolidation of democratic values within its entire territory are essential conditions for the European integration of the Republic of Moldova. It is in this context that the President of the Republic of Moldova has launched an initiative on a stability and security pact for Moldova. This document is aimed at ensuring consensus among the parties concerned, in order to guarantee the development of an independent, sovereign and integral Moldovan State. We believe that holding an international conference on this issue should be the next step in initiating the debate on the measures to follow. This situation demonstrates the international character of the problem, as well as the inefficiency of existing regional settlement mechanisms.

Today, the main challenges for the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields stem from world trends, such as globalization and increasing ecological interdependence, and from persistent factors such as widespread poverty and severe social inequalities between and within States. They should be addressed by a strengthened global partnership between industrialized countries, developing countries, countries with transitional economies and intergovernmental institutions.

The Millennium Development Goals remain the most significant objectives agreed to by the international community, as they cover the areas of major concern for the peoples of the world. It is therefore of utmost importance to achieve the Goals, as well as other specific developmental targets set subsequently by several major United Nations conferences in the economic and social fields. In this context, we welcome the decision of the General Assembly, adopted at its last session, to hold in September 2005 a high-level meeting that will undertake a comprehensive review of the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, including the Millennium Development Goals, as well as a review of the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

This review is necessary, given the overall slow pace of implementation. We share the concerns expressed in this respect by many States, in particular by the countries sponsoring the world leaders' New York Declaration on the Action against Hunger and Poverty, which was adopted on 20 September. Like them, we believe that if resolute and urgent action is not taken, the Millennium Development Goals will not be reached by 2015 in some regions of the world.

We should not forget, in this context, about the grave social and economic problems that affect crisis-stricken countries and countries with special needs, in particular landlocked countries. Creating an enabling environment for sustainable development is a challenge for them and, therefore, they should be further assisted by the United Nations system and the donor community.

I would like to reiterate, in conclusion, my country's commitment to the Organization and its willingness to cooperate with other Member States in order to achieve the noble goals and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Laurie Chan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Chan (Solomon Islands): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the Government and people of Solomon Islands, to convey to you our warm and sincere congratulations on your election as President of this session of the United Nations General Assembly. May I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, our colleague, the Honourable Julian Hunte, Foreign Minister of Saint Lucia, for his able and sterling stewardship in making the Assembly's fifty-eighth session proactive and responsive to the challenges it has faced over the last 12 months.

I also wish to express our deep appreciation to the United Nations Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his focused leadership in steering the work of the Secretariat through difficult and sometimes uncharted waters over the past year.

Only four years into the new millennium, the complexity of ongoing and new challenges has redefined the international system, resulting in uncertainty and imbalances in certain parts of the globe. Ensuing debates over multilateralism versus unilateralism in the resolution of crisis situations have epitomized the complex nature of events during the past year. This makes the call two years ago by our Secretary-General for institutional reforms more urgent now than ever before.

Solomon Islands looks forward to the recommendations of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons, in particular, to proposals that will revitalize and give new momentum to the United Nations. These reforms must ensure that the United Nations is flexible and responsive to the needs of our time. To this end, Solomon Islands fully supports the proposed enlargement of the Council and reaffirms its call for Japan and Germany to become permanent members of the Council. We believe that the enlargement should affect both the permanent and non-permanent membership categories. It is also our fervent hope and desire to see that the Secretariat reflects the diversity of its membership. In this regard, while it should continue to recruit the best available candidates, opportunities within the Secretariat must be made available to small island countries on the basis of in-country, rather than externally conducted, assessment examinations.

As you are aware, this year the United Nations family marked the tenth anniversary of the ethnic

genocide in Rwanda. The occasion called on the United Nations to play a more proactive role towards ensuring that such tragic events are never allowed to happen again.

No more than four years ago, my own country, Solomon Islands, experienced the hardship of a conflict situation when tensions erupted between two of the many ethnic groups in the country. In response, Solomon Islands sought assistance from every possible institution, including the Security Council. In this regard, I am pleased to say that my region, through the Pacific Islands Forum under its security mechanism as enshrined in the Biketawa Declaration, responded to that "911" call.

The Pacific Islands Forum regional security mechanism is in harmony with the spirit of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), led by our bigger regional neighbour, Australia, strongly supported by New Zealand and other Pacific Islands Forum member countries, went beyond the mere restoration of law and order and security. In a spirit of Pacific cooperation and partnership between Solomon Islands and Pacific Islands Forum member countries, a long-term approach of strengthening the country's State institutions was set in place, thus allowing the process of healing, reconstruction, rehabilitation and nation-building to continue the course of unifying the country and its less than half a million, but diverse, inhabitants, who speak some 80 different local languages.

The success of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands in promptly stabilizing the country within a period of three months, collecting some 3,700 weapons without a shot being fired, presents a fine example of the importance of regional cooperation in resolving conflict situations. On this note, I wish to pay tribute to all our Pacific neighbours and to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Commission for Human Rights, the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Union (EU), the Republic of China, Japan, the United Kingdom, the International Red Cross and the civil society; they have assisted and are continuing to assist in the process of our country's ongoing recovery and rehabilitation.

I must also underscore my belief and conviction that in order for peace to be achieved it must be desired; moreover, I would add, there must be a workable mechanism to ensure its realization and sustenance. In this regard, my Government is fully convinced that the positive results of our partnership with RAMSI could be sustained through our recently adopted National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan (NERRDP), which provides a blueprint for an integrated process of development and nation-building for the common good of our people.

I am further convinced, that the Pacific Plan recently adopted by the Pacific Islands Forum leaders in Apia, Samoa, represents a regional road map for cooperation that could complement national efforts aimed at building an improved and secure livelihood for the diverse people of the region. Through its creation of stronger and deeper links between countries in the region and resource-sharing, including governance and aligning of policies, the Pacific Plan could assist our countries to address challenges and issues that sovereign member States may lack the ability and capacity to address individually as a result of our countries' smallness and inherent limitations caused by economies of scale.

Solomon Islands notes the positive developments that have taken place in the peace process on Bougainville. We recognize the important role played by the United Nations in the peace process there and would urge its continuing involvement to see the process through. Solomon Islands, for its part, has signed a number of bilateral agreements with Papua New Guinea, which will support the good work that has already been undertaken towards peace.

On the issue of Palestine, my delegation subscribes to the view that the resolution of the Middle East conflict can only be possible through negotiations. It is in this spirit that we call upon all parties to abide by the Quartet's road map for peace, and we urge a halt to all acts of aggression.

Turning to the global fight against terrorism, the recent terrorist attacks, especially in Iraq, Indonesia, and the Beslan school in southern Russia manifest the continuing menace and evil of terrorism at large. We have witnessed many innocent lives, including those of women and children, being lost due to these senseless terror attacks. My delegation offers its deepest condolences to those who have lost loved ones during these unforgivable incidents. Solomon Islands condemns in the strongest possible terms such acts of terror and fully support international efforts to combat this scourge. In this regard, I wish to join others in calling on the global community to support small States to build their national capacities towards ongoing efforts aimed at combating transnational

crimes, such as arms smuggling, drug trafficking, people smuggling, money laundering and terrorism.

The United Nations Charter promotes the economic and social progress of Member States, especially those facing special development problems. For a country recovering from a post-conflict situation, Solomon Islands considers international frameworks such as the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, and the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States as vehicles for enhancing peace and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Solomon Islands is a small island developing State and a least developed country, where its development challenges are multifaceted in nature. Unfortunately, the level of international cooperation envisaged for the Programmes either have not materialized or have been minimal. Despite this, my Government is undertaking reforms that include the appointment of a national focal point for the Brussels Programme of Action. Hence, we are hopeful that, with better coordination, Solomon Islands can take full advantage of and maximize all opportunities the Programme has to offer.

The issue of debt-servicing continues to present challenges, and even obstacles, to the development programmes of many poor developing States. Debt burdens continue to divert attention in national budgets away from the development of necessary infrastructures and the delivery of basic and essential social services. Solomon Islands therefore calls on the international community to give greater attention to debt issues.

Solomon Islands attaches much importance to the Millennium Development Goals, and these have been mainstreamed into our NERRDP. While we will use the 2005 high-level event mentioned in the Secretary General's 2004 report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals to take stock of our progress, we are confident that NERRDP can serve as a road map for the medium to long-term implementation of our commitments. NERRDP provides a useful framework within which important issues, such as economic and institutional reform, good governance, upholding of democracy and its values of freedom, and respect for the basic principles of human rights can be nurtured and harnessed for the betterment and improvement of the livelihood of our people and society, including the sustenance of peace in our country.

Solomon Islands would like to pay closer attention to the emerging health threats it faces. In particular, malaria remains the predominant cause of death of among children in Solomon Islands. The lack of data on HIV/AIDS presents a threat to the country and has the potential of creating a devastating impact on its economy and social structure. With the support of WHO, the Global Fund to fight AIDS and Japan, we are determined to put in place appropriate preventive actions.

Solomon Islands, which is geographically scattered across some 1,800 kilometres, comprising almost 1,000 small islands and atolls, has an agriculture-based economy that is dependent on the environment. Sustainable management of resources is essential for guaranteeing the security of future generations.

The hurricanes that hit the southern United States, the Bahamas, Grenada, Haiti and Jamaica in the Caribbean in the recent past; cyclone Heita, which devastated Niue in 2003; flooding in Fiji; and continuous heavy rains in Solomon Islands all bring home the stark reality of our world's vulnerability to natural disasters. We realize the great difficulty and pain that smaller island developing States face in mitigating the magnitude and impact of such disasters. To this end, we extend our condolences and sympathy for the loss of life and property caused by the recent hurricanes in Grenada and Haiti and would urge the international community to assist in relief efforts to those who are affected.

Generally, Solomon Islands strongly feels that more could be done by the international community towards safeguarding our environment. Hence, we acknowledge the partnership of the Global Fund in assisting environmental programmes globally, and we would encourage that the focus of further assistance should extend to other sectors of sustainable development, such as energy, water and sanitation.

My delegation has closely followed the review of the Barbados Programme of Action and the development of a Group of 77 strategy paper. While negotiations are still ongoing, Solomon Islands, as a member of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), acknowledges that the strategy paper strengthens the Barbados Programme and places it as an action-oriented programme with which we can all identify. We are hopeful the Mauritius meeting will revitalize our efforts towards protecting the environment and enhancing sustainable development.

Trade remains a significant source of economic growth and development for many developing States. Regionally, Pacific island countries have gradually begun the process of regional integration. South-South trade cooperation among Forum island countries culminated in the entry into force of the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement last year, and the Melanesian Spearhead Group trade agreement is being reviewed with a view to further broadening its scope and its markets 10 years after its inception. The Pacific members of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States are negotiating an economic partnership agreement with the European Union in the framework of the Cotonou Agreement. Those developments manifest continuing preparations by small island developing economies in the Pacific Islands Forum region for gradual adaptation into the broader process of the globalization of the world economy.

Solomon Islands notes that the eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, convened in June this year in São Paulo, built confidence and consensus on ongoing multilateral trade negotiations. Solomon Islands supports that process and urges making it more participatory and inclusive so that no one is left behind, especially the small and vulnerable island developing economies and the least developed countries. We are mindful of the need to recognize the inherent structural problems of geographical size, isolation from markets and the constraints resulting from a lack of supply-side capacities and economies of scale, especially in the case of small island developing States such as Solomon Islands. However, as a member of the World Trade Organization, we are pleased that the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations embraces a development dimension, in particular the recognition of the principle of special and differential treatment, in its work programme on small island developing economies.

One of the principles of the United Nations Charter is to open membership to all States that accept their Charter obligations. The Republic of China on Taiwan has registered its interest in being part of the United Nations family. Solomon Islands once again calls for the Republic of China to be made a full Member of the United Nations. Solomon Islands enjoys warm and cordial relations with the Republic of China and is mindful of the threats facing the world today. Threats such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) are transnational and transborder in nature and require the cooperation and engagement of all countries of the world. To deny one country the right to participate weakens global mechanisms and jeopardizes the security of all.

The Republic of China on Taiwan is democratic, and its vibrant economy is ranked seventeenth globally. It has the third largest foreign exchange reserves. Its development experience offers important lessons on the need to embrace freedom, respect for the basic principles of human rights, respect for freedom of the press and the uninhibited functioning of democratic institutions. The Republic of China's ability and capacity to contribute to strengthening the United Nations should be seriously considered, especially at a time when the Organization could do with all the help it can receive.

Solomon Islands calls upon the Assembly to find a process that will allow the Republic of China on Taiwan to become a full and equal Member of the United Nations. The Pacific Islands Forum has a mechanism that engages both Chinas in our dialogue process, and we have continuously benefited from that rich interaction.

To conclude, I call upon the Assembly to get real and confront the increasingly varied and complex challenges we face today. The purpose and the role of the United Nations are ultimately to create a peaceful, just and prosperous world that offers hope to all. That requires making the Organization flexible, innovative and responsive to ever-changing global demands. Thus, the onus is on us to make bold and tough decisions that breathe new life into our Organization.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency the Honourable Jaya Krishna Cuttaree, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Cooperation of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr. Cuttaree (Mauritius): Mr. President, I bring you the greetings and the best wishes of the Government and people of Mauritius. It is also a matter of pride and honour to see you preside over this premier world institution. That honour is not only recognition of the contribution of your country, Gabon, in world affairs but also a great moment for our continent, Africa. We are confident that, with your wide experience and vast diplomatic skills, you will successfully steer the work of the Assembly. My delegation pledges its full support to you during your tenure.

My delegation would also like to place on record our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his able and excellent leadership of the General

Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. As fellow islanders, we derived great satisfaction and pride from his unequalled stewardship. He assumed and discharged the high responsibilities of President of the Assembly with commitment, dedication and great diplomacy. We thank him for his service to the world community.

Allow me also to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his relentless efforts and determination to ensure that our Organization continues to play its role effectively in the international arena.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place as we prepare ourselves to tackle and face major challenges and developments over the next 12 months. Of particular importance to small island developing States such as my own, 2005 will begin with two major events: the International Meeting for the full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, which will be hosted by Mauritius; and the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to be held in Japan.

Ten years after Barbados, small island developing States continue to face practically the same challenges in their drive to achieve sustainable development. Their small size, fragile ecosystems, geographic isolation and limited resources, compounded by the threats of climate change, rising sea levels and natural disasters, make them particularly vulnerable. While it is a fact that many developing countries face the increasing pressures posed by the combined forces of globalization and trade liberalization, such pressures are even more exacerbating for small island developing States. Their small markets and the limited market access for their products constrain them greatly in their efforts to integrate smoothly into the global economy. They also suffer from natural vulnerabilities to phenomena such as hurricanes, earthquakes and tsunamis. The devastation caused by the recent series of hurricanes in the Caribbean islands demonstrates the extent of our vulnerability. It is true that those vulnerabilities have been recognized in a variety of international forums, but such recognition has yet to crystallize in concrete actions in favour of small island developing States. The precarious situation of our States is of direct concern to the international community as a whole.

May we then resolve to take bold initiatives to implement meaningfully the Barbados Programme and to respond to related emerging issues so that small island developing States can build resilience and capacity and be integrated fully into the global economy? Similarly, in the multilateral trading system, we expect the emergence of an environment conducive to enabling our States to improve their competitiveness, their market access and the diversification of their economies. We therefore expect the World Trade Organization to soon establish a work programme for small economies.

As a small island developing State, Mauritius is indeed honoured to host the International Meeting. The International Meeting should be not only a collective gathering to reflect on the specificities of our concerns. It should also be a landmark in the history of the major United Nations conferences, with deliverable outcomes and the means necessary for their implementation.

We in Mauritius are leaving no stone unturned to make that event truly historic and memorable. It is important that the entire international community participate in that meeting, which, allow me to point out, is a United Nations meeting on small island development States and not a meeting for those States alone.

(*spoke in French*)

The work to be undertaken by the small island developing States is based upon sustainable development and the restricted resources available to those countries. How can one not welcome, therefore, the decision taken by the Government of Burkina Faso, host of the next summit of la Francophonie, which has chosen solidarity and sustainable development as the theme of the summit.

Our preoccupation with sustainable development — the basis of the Johannesburg Summit — is even stronger in the context of globalization today. Although only a handful of developing island States are French-speaking, we trust that the Summit will highlight the need for us to find, within the international community, ways and means to help small island developing States, which may then become models for sustainable development.

(*spoke in English*)

Global warming, and its related effects on climate change, is now an undisputed reality, and islands suffer the brunt of it, even though — let me emphasize this — we are the least responsible for the cause. We believe that the Kyoto Protocol is the most appropriate mechanism for global action now and in the future, to address the issue of global warming. We call, therefore,

for its ratification and entry into force, as soon as possible.

Africa, home to 34 of the world's 48 poorest countries, remains an enormous challenge for the United Nations. The deadly spread of HIV and AIDS continues to claim a devastating toll on the continent, particularly in southern Africa. We in Africa are committed to further democratize our societies and give our people a rightful voice in the decision-making process. That is why at the continental level, we are doing all we can, despite our scarce resources, to consolidate the African Union and make it central in our collective bid to grapple with the development concerns of our region. Using that perspective, we have come up with our own home-grown programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in order to attain the ultimate goal that we have fixed for ourselves — the total integration of Africa.

Since we launched the African Union Peace and Security Council last May, we have received encouraging support from some of our development partners. I should like to use this platform to urge the international community to support the African Union in that field to enable it to come to grips with the conflicts that continue to divert our attention and meagre resources from our development efforts.

In addressing the issue of conflicts on the continent, the African Union has amply demonstrated that it means business, and any assistance it gets from the international community can only help it to achieve its goals. But let me hasten to say that the African Union's involvement in peace processes should not distract the United Nations Security Council from its primary responsibility to maintain peace and security in Africa. Indeed, the Security Council should not allow itself to be perceived as being selective in its approach with regard to conflicts in various parts of the world. Experiences in the Great Lakes region and in West Africa have shown that the combined efforts of the Security Council and the African Union can bring tangible results.

Before I leave this part of my statement, let me refer to the unjust treatment that continues to be meted out to the Saharawi people who are still struggling for their right to self-determination. It is the duty of this world body to ensure a speedy conclusion of that matter. In this regard, my delegation reiterates its support for the Settlement Plan and any other political initiative acceptable to the parties concerned that will help to take the process forward for a durable and sustainable solution. The Saharawi people deserve that commitment from us.

As this Assembly is aware, Mauritius has always favoured a bilateral approach in our resolve to restore our exercise of sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago which, prior to independence from the United Kingdom, was unlawfully detached from our territory, in violation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples contained in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), and Assembly resolutions 2066 (XX), 2232 (XXI) and 2357 (XXII). Such bilateral approaches have unfortunately not yielded any result so far and certain recent regrettable unilateral actions by the United Kingdom have not been helpful.

While we shall continue to favour a settlement of the matter through dialogue, we shall use all avenues open to us in order to exercise our full sovereign rights over the Chagos Archipelago. The Assembly should also note that this issue has a tragic human dimension. Before Mauritius acceded to its independence, all the inhabitants of the Chagos were forced to leave the land of their birth, where they had lived for several generations. The plight of those inhabitants must now be comprehensively addressed.

In the same context, my delegation looks forward to the resumption of dialogue with the French Government over Tromelin island.

Mauritius is a firm believer and, indeed, a keen player in regional cooperation and integration, not as an end in itself but as a sure means to enable us to integrate the global economy. We consider regional cooperation as a necessary step to enable Africa to benefit from globalization. We have therefore spared no effort to promote regional cooperation. Since the early 1980s we in Mauritius, have been playing a pro-active role in advancing the objectives of the Abuja Treaty. Mauritius is a very active member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and of the South African Development Community (SADC).

As the new Chair of SADC, we look forward to working very closely with all our fellow member States in advancing the objectives of the organization, promoting community building through regional integration and aligning national policies for regional cooperation so that they stay on course in the globalization process. We will also endeavour to forge a strong relationship between SADC and its

development partners as well as with other subregional, continental and multilateral organizations.

After the failure of the WTO Ministerial Conference at Cancún, the successful outcome of the July 2004 General Council meeting has come as a ray of hope to put the trade talks back on track. The July package of frameworks and other agreements that the WTO members approved will greatly enhance the chances for a successful completion of the Doha Development Agenda negotiations.

We therefore welcome the decision adopted by the WTO General Council to fulfil the development dimensions of the Doha Development Agenda, which places the needs and interests of developing and least developed countries at the heart of the Doha Agenda work programme.

In that context, let me make an appeal for a meaningful synergy to be established among the development agencies and other United Nations institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions, in order to ensure that developing countries develop their capacity to increase their share of world trade as a necessary pathway to prosperity.

The situation in the Middle East remains extremely preoccupying for all freedom-loving nations and peoples. We go on speaking of the need for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, without realizing that each year the peace and security situation in the region is growing worse.

Over the past year, we witnessed more targeted assassinations, increased terrorist acts, daily recriminations from both sides and an expansion of settlement activities. The illegal construction of a wall by Israel in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories has worsened an already complex situation.

Almost two years ago the road map called for a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israel-Palestinian conflict by 2005. The year 2005 is at our doorstep and we are still grappling with how to put the derailed peace process back on track. We believe that the road map remains the only viable option for peace in the region. We call on both Israel and Palestine to exercise maximum restraint, undertake confidence-building measures and create the appropriate environment, with the help of the Quartet, to implement the road map.

My delegation believes that what is needed today is not a wall, but a political solution and a renewed commitment from the international community that would resolve the conflict altogether. Only the creation of the much-awaited Palestinian State, existing side by side with Israel with secured and recognized borders, can bring peace and stability to the Middle East.

The political process in Iraq reached an important milestone last June with the handing over of authority to the Iraqi Interim Government. My delegation believes that the holding of national elections early next year, as required by Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), will give the people of Iraq a unique opportunity to take the destiny of their country into their own hands. However, the current security situation in Iraq is very disturbing. My delegation condemns all acts of violence that can disrupt Iraq's political and economic transition. The international community must be fully engaged in its efforts to rebuild a safe, democratic and peaceful Iraq.

Given the potential threat posed by nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, it is a matter of serious concern that we still have not been able to find common ground to initiate a process leading to complete disarmament. Significant differences still persist among parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We once again appeal to all Member States to translate their stated commitments to the cause of disarmament into action.

Mauritius supports and implements fully the international disarmament treaties such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and has always supported the various United Nations resolutions related to the consolidation of those regimes, including resolution 1540 (2004), which focuses on non-proliferation issues.

Along with our fight against weapons of mass destruction, we should also stay the course against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which have been the weapons of choice in recent conflicts, particularly in Africa.

Terrorist acts continue to create fear and havoc among peaceful nations and lead to the loss of lives, particularly among innocent civilians, including women and children. We should therefore reflect on the effectiveness of the international response to terrorism. It is becoming increasingly evident that the war against international terrorism cannot be won by military might alone. Several reports submitted to this Assembly have already amply demonstrated that

problems such as poverty, social inequality, unemployment and illiteracy constitute breeding grounds for terrorism. Genuine international cooperation is therefore needed to comprehensively address the root causes of terrorism.

Allow me to share some thoughts with respect to the future of our Organization. The world emerged from the Second World War resolved to ensure peace among nations, and the United Nations was born with that vision firmly in mind. Now, more than half a century later, in full recognition of the drastic and far-reaching changes that have transformed our world, there is full consensus for a reform of our Organization.

There is indeed general agreement that the current structure of the Security Council needs to be reviewed to reflect the new realities of the world. We firmly believe that a greater commitment has to be demonstrated by every member of the Organization in order to reach an agreement on a reformed Security Council based on wider representation, transparency and equitable geographical distribution with the inclusion of developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America as permanent members. Here, let me reiterate our conviction that India fully deserves to have that status. In that respect, I need to underscore the need for small island States, which are scattered over all the oceans of the world, to have an adequate voice in the Council.

It is therefore our sincere hope that the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change appointed by the Secretary-General will make concrete and practical recommendations to make the United Nations more credible and responsive to the expectations of people in every corner of the globe. The high-level plenary meeting, which is to be held next year, would also be an opportunity for us to take stock of progress made in respect to the goals set in the major United Nations conferences and summits.

Mauritius continues to be an active supporter of the United Nations in its efforts to save succeeding generations from war and suffering and to promote social progress and better standards of life. Mauritius believes that a strengthened United Nations, evolving within the framework of a credible multilateral system, is the only effective instrument at the disposal of the international community to bring order and ensure the coherence of international economic, social and environmental policies.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency The Right Honourable Sir Rabbie L. Namaliu, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Namaliu (Papua New Guinea): My delegation warmly welcomes you to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and pledges our support. We acknowledge that you are also from our Forum of Small States group and therefore share our common problems and challenges. Please convey my delegation's commendation to your predecessor, the Honourable Julian Hunte, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia, for his strong leadership of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his staff for the good work they continue to do for our global community.

We currently live in a changing world, one which past generations would even be amazed at. One of the greatest achievements of the United Nations system is the process of decolonization which has seen more than 70 countries, including my own, take their rightful place in this Assembly. The process will not be complete, however, until the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories, including New Caledonia and Tokelau, have exercised their inalienable right to self-determination.

The world continues to witness great leaps in technology, but at the same time we have also seen an increase in some global dilemmas — poverty and hunger, the ravages of HIV/AIDS, wars, conflicts and terrorism, among others.

Each of our countries face numerous challenges in this changing world and many of them are common to all of us, regardless of our size, location and status as developed or developing countries. Under the circumstances, and more than ever before, we need to work together as a community of nations to help each other address those challenges. Nowhere is that more evident than in the domain of international peace and security. A terrorist act committed in one State today also affects others elsewhere in the global community.

We condemn the recent tragedy in Beslan, Russia, the bombing of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta and the ongoing terrorist acts in the Middle East, Iraq, and other parts of the world. We also condemn the recent

tragedy in Darfur, the Sudan, and commend Canada and Japan for their generous assistance.

In circumstances like the foregoing, those most affected are innocent civilians, especially women and children. We therefore support the Secretary-General's efforts to rally the international community to subscribe to the treaties on the protection of civilians.

In many cases, terrorists also take the lives of United Nations and other humanitarian workers who are doing unselfish and dedicated work under difficult circumstances to serve our common humanity. In that regard, we urge all Member States to support the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

The situation in the Middle East remains intractable, requiring constant and deliberate attention by the United Nations, especially by the Security Council. Our own experience in the Bougainville conflict has taught us that there can be peace if all parties really desire it and are willing to resolve their differences. We therefore urge all parties to the conflict in the Middle East — including Israel and Palestine, as well as the major players, particularly the Quartet — to formulate a peace plan that is mutually acceptable to all.

Papua New Guinea concurs with Secretary-General Kofi Annan's recent statement to the Assembly at its 3rd meeting, which highlighted how important it is for the rule of law to prevail if we are to achieve peace and security in the world.

Like many other Member States, Papua New Guinea has acceded to the various counter-terrorism treaties, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). We believe that the reporting obligations under the provisions of those treaties should be streamlined to include regional reports, which would solve many capacity issues for small nations with limited resources. Because many of our regional legal, military and law enforcement agencies meet regularly, those meetings could provide the opportunity to compile regional reports on our fight against international terrorism. We believe that there is every desire to fulfil treaty obligations; but if some of the more onerous tasks can be lightened for the small countries through regional reports, bodies like the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Security Council, the General Assembly and other related agencies could be better served.

The small States are doing their best to fulfil their obligations. Like many other Members States, we take seriously our responsibilities and obligations to fight the scourge of international terrorism and related issues including the trafficking of people.

The Pacific region advocates that the United Nations continue to closely and seriously study the notion of collective security along with collective action, ideas upon which many of our actions to bring stability to our region continue to be based.

We are custodians of the biggest ocean and its resources. Papua New Guinea, in particular, is endowed with 5 to 7 per cent of the world's biodiversity. We therefore share a common responsibility to ensure the protection and conservation of those resources which are of vital importance to humanity.

We encourage sustainable logging practices in order to avoid the denuding of our vast rainforest resources. We condemn destructive fishing methods and urge all Member States to adhere to sustainable management and conservation regimes in order to meet future demands.

At the Pacific Islands Forum, our leaders recently adopted a new vision for the Pacific region in the form of the Pacific Plan, which embraces four key areas: economic growth, sustainable development, security and good governance.

The Pacific Islands Forum will be engaging with the European Union and other development partners to advance the interests of the region, especially those of economic growth and sustainable development.

I share the view enunciated by other speakers that there can be no security without development, and that equally, there can be no development without peace and security. As important links, both need to be addressed simultaneously if we want peace and sustainable development to prevail.

We are pleased to see regional solidarity and assistance in conflict situations bear good results in Bougainville and in our neighbour, the Solomon Islands. We also note that other regional actions taken by our leaders, such as the establishment of the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre in Fiji, enhance law enforcement and intelligence sharing in the region.

Concerning good governance, our leaders encouraged Pacific Member Governments to sign and

ratify the United Nations Convention against Corruption in accordance with the spirit of the Biketawa Declaration.

Over the past several years, Papua New Guinea has been the beneficiary of regional and international assistance in the rebuilding and return to normalcy of the island of Bougainville, after a decade-long conflict. We thank the members of the Security Council, both past and present, for their goodwill, patience and understanding in what has been an extremely painful experience for us. We have appreciated the support and counsel of each member of the Council throughout that important process. The conflict has greatly affected our nation and we have learned many lessons. We are re-establishing the rule of law in a profound and thorough constitutional process which will result in a democratically elected autonomous government for the people of Bougainville. While we are close to achieving that, we are equally mindful that each step taken now to finalize and consolidate the Bougainville constitution is critically important for the autonomous government of Bougainville to be sustained successfully.

We continue to receive valuable support and assistance for the peace process from the Secretary-General as well as from our Pacific neighbours: Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. Rebuilding and restoration of services in Bougainville has been greatly assisted by our development partners, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the European Union, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, among others. We thank them all and look forward to their continued support and cooperation.

We continue to be concerned about the security and vulnerability of many of our small island States. As noted and endorsed by Pacific leaders at the recent Pacific Islands Forum Summit in Samoa, the forthcoming International Meeting on the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action, to be held in Mauritius in 2005, will provide an opportunity to discuss with our development partners the many issues which confront small island States, including those in our subregion.

Development of women and children through sports must have a special place in our quest to improve the socio-economic well-being of our people. We are also working hard to implement the Millennium Development Goals and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to have devastating consequences in many developing countries. Our leaders in the Pacific region have endorsed a regional strategy for HIV/AIDS noting the need to address the issue urgently.

Small arms and light weapons will always threaten the stability of many small States. Therefore, we look forward to the continuing work towards a United-Nations-supported action plan for dealing with small arms.

Climate change is a threat to all humankind and therefore deserves the attention of the international community, which must work together to address it. We are appreciative of the position of the United Kingdom as underlined by Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Tony Blair, in a recent statement highlighting the threat of sea level rise and related issues. I am aware that there are scientific studies being carried out, but the real issue is that the effects of climate change and global warming are being felt daily by many island States. We in Papua New Guinea are no more immune to climate change and sea level rise than are many other small island States. The island communities in Papua New Guinea, like those of our neighbouring countries in the Pacific, are being affected adversely by sea level rise. We empathize with our colleagues from many other island States which continually suffer from the effects of the problem. Our plight is further compounded by natural disasters, including the ravages of hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and tsunamis.

In that context, our sympathies go to the peoples and the Governments of the Caribbean region, especially those of Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic, among others, as well as to the inhabitants of cities and towns of the southern states of the United States of America, which have been devastated by the recent hurricanes.

As a global community we must pool our resources and consider ways of mitigating the adverse effects of climate change in order to help those States which are vulnerable. We applaud the intention of the Russian Federation to consider becoming a party to the Kyoto Protocol and urge others to recognize their responsibility to the global community by doing the same.

We look forward to the final report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change appointed by the Secretary-General, which will form the basis for high-level discussions on United Nations reforms, including the expansion and composition of the Security Council. We believe Council membership should be expanded in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories to take into account the lack of sufficient representation of developing countries in the Asia-Pacific, African and Latin American regions. We also believe that Japan and Germany should be seriously considered for permanent membership, with equal privileges and obligations. Consideration may be given to other countries with appropriate qualifications and integrity, particularly from the developing world.

We also commend the indications from the Panel that the definition of "hard" versus "soft" threats is no longer relevant. That will allow a proper and objective discussion to be held, given that the resonance of perceived threats can be viewed differently depending on where the threat is.

That said, Papua New Guinea believes that reform of the United Nations system should be comprehensive and that the General Assembly should regain its pre-eminent role as the principal organ of the United Nations. That will enable all Member States, large and small, to engage more meaningfully in addressing all challenges in an effective way in order to help the United Nations fulfil its role in the pursuit of a peaceful, just and prosperous world. That is the purpose for which the United Nations was established.

As we move towards next year's review of the Millennium Development Goals and the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, we should all look at the dire needs of the majority of humanity. My delegation believes that the Millennium Development Goals provide the blueprint for achieving those objectives.

Finally, let me conclude by reaffirming Papua New Guinea's support for the one-China policy, which provides the sound basis for our bilateral relations with the People's Republic of China.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency the Honourable Barak Sope Mautamate, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Mautamate (Vanuatu): I bring to this gathering a warm greeting from the people of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. President, at the outset, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I also take this occasion to acknowledge with deep gratitude the contributions of your predecessor, who so competently steered the work of the fifty-eighth session to its conclusion.

Here, I must also acknowledge the outstanding role of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has been resolute in his efforts to revitalize the Organization's ability to address global concerns. My delegation reaffirms its support for Mr. Annan's profound and meticulous leadership of the United Nations.

I also take this opportunity to convey the condolences of my Government and the people of Vanuatu to the people of the Caribbean nations, in particular Haiti, for the loss of so many lives and for the extensive damage caused by the destructive forces of nature that recently swept through the region. We offer them our moral support and pray that the affected peoples will soon recover and that the devastated areas of their nations will be swiftly rehabilitated and rebuilt. Those inevitable natural calamities demonstrate once more the extreme and particular vulnerability of island States, which seriously affects national economies.

Every year, from this rostrum, we reaffirm our faith and confidence in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter. We entered the new millennium with much anticipation and hope of creating a just and better world for all our citizens. However, global insecurity and the varying dimensions of serious conflict have created a frightening situation. It is to be expected that the world will plunge into further turmoil unless the role of the United Nations — the only truly global body — is reinvigorated and recovers its legitimate responsibility of addressing the causes of conflict and maintaining peace and security. I come to the Assembly with some trepidation, as I see our world spiralling out of control unless its Members uphold the universality of the United Nations decision-making process in addressing global concerns.

The world is at a crossroads and we meet here at a critical juncture. Around us, civil strife, wars, poverty, disease, famine, drought, natural disasters, terrorism, environmental degradation, depletion of land and marine resources and other phenomena are ravaging the world. The displacement of peoples from their natural habitats and the sacrilege of human suffering in many parts of the world demonstrate that

unless immediate remedial strategies are implemented, the global situation will continue to deteriorate.

Moreover, the emergence of conflict in areas we once believed stable, the deterioration of law and order and the senseless killing of innocent peoples are painful reminders that we need to rethink our policies and decisions. Globalization has brought with it both opportunities and challenges, but for the small island States the challenges are much more ominous. Those are the realities.

Those negative developments lead me to conclude that the United Nations is indispensable and that we all need to work as friends and equal partners. Globalization has brought nations together. We are interlinked and interdependent. That demands global cooperation and governance from all responsible Members of the Organization. Understandably, there are the vested interests of the powerful, but that only necessitates genuine cooperation and goodwill to achieve convergence of those interests. The United Nations role in that regard must remain fundamental in order to ensure compatibility with the international legal framework. Maverick policies and decisions will only create further divisions and hostility.

With that in mind, I believe there is now consensus on introducing far-reaching reforms that make the United Nations relevant for all its Members, with the fundamental objective of preserving international peace, security and stability.

My Government fully supports efforts to reform the United Nations system in order to ensure a stronger and more effective Organization. On that note, my delegation endorses the view of other delegations on the need to review the membership of the Security Council so that it will better reflect geographical distribution and the underrepresented groups of Member countries of the United Nations, without affecting the authority of the Council.

I hope all the rhetoric that has come before the Assembly can be translated into concrete and practical action. We must be resolute in our collective desire to work together as sovereign nations in addressing the world's problems through multilateral institutions. The blueprint for international cooperation has been established, but reforming certain structures in the United Nations system must be seen as a prerequisite if we are serious about moving forward. The Achilles heel of the current structure is the imbalance of power in the United Nations system. It has become so chronic that it has weakened the multilateral focus, cohesiveness and internationalism of the United Nations.

The principles of democratization and good governance so actively advocated and championed by some Members must be reflected in the reorganization and decision-making process of the United Nations system.

It is in this regard that Vanuatu supports the review of the permanent membership of the Security Council in order to include Japan and one representative each from the African continent, the Middle East and the group of small developing countries. A more representative Council will bring about openness and transparency, create confidence and ameliorate understanding and cooperation. A restructuring of the membership of the Security Council is long overdue. Diversity is essential there.

My Government looks forward to the report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Threats.

Although the fight against terrorism takes centre stage, it must not overshadow the socio-economic development agenda and other serious security concerns affecting the developing world, and in particular small island States. Resources will inevitably be diverted towards combating terrorism in all its facets, but judicious decisions need to be taken. It is against that background that our delegation wishes to associate itself with statements made by other delegations on the imperativeness of supporting the development constraints of developing nations, and in particular the concerns of the small island States on vulnerability.

At the Millennium Summit leaders adopted the eight Millennium Development Goals, with targets to be achieved by 2015. Although commitments have been made, the lethargic performance of many countries, including Vanuatu, demonstrate the need for more international support in assisting countries to meet those targets.

The global economic situation today discriminates against many developing economies. Unfair trading practices and the imposition of intrusive policies on national economies — including that of Vanuatu — affect those economies by opening them up to unfavourable conditions that only favour stronger nations. The post-Cancún period poses extreme challenges to the economic survival and socio-

economic stability of many small developing nations like Vanuatu.

My Government's initial focus is on the social sector, namely, on health and education. The Government's prioritized action agenda, which was launched last year in consultation with our development partners, is the catalyst for Vanuatu's medium- to long-term strategic planning. This development policy framework is consistent with achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and emphasizes the need to empower our rural population through infrastructure- and capacity-building initiatives. We appeal to our development partners to adequately assist us in its implementation.

On that note, my delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the United States of America for granting Vanuatu eligibility to access development funding from the Millennium Challenge Account.

The primary responsibility for development lies with a State itself. Yet, external influences and conditional aid have not adequately corresponded with Vanuatu's development priorities and achievements. The pretext for meting out foreign advice conditioned with development assistance has been to improve governance and other sectors considered vital in establishing a strong economy. In Vanuatu's case that line of argument has not produced tangible results, with restricted progress being reflected in our continuous struggle with reforms that are more or less dictated by external forces.

Both the recipient and the external assistance must be balanced and sensitive to national interests. Too often, that normal reaction is misunderstood by some of our development partners. From Vanuatu's perspective, externally driven reforms must be buttressed by an equal partnership that respects local tradition, culture and the rights of all citizens without disturbing the essential uniting mechanisms of society that have successfully held us together over time. An exploitative agenda can only erode and dismantle those ingrained mechanisms, leaving us vulnerable to the rapid changes affecting all of us today. Vanuatu embraces democracy and the concepts of governance and transparency, but they must be tailored to suit the traditional system without affecting the relevance and significance of those far-reaching principles.

In recent times, the history of the Organization has been characterized by indecision, which blemishes the record of the United Nations. I speak about the longstanding issue of self-determination, and in particular the case of West Papua, and I do so while being cognizant of the Charter and while espousing the principles that continue to guide the Organization's efforts in the process of self-determination. The United Nations must be consistent in its decisions for the recognition and respect of the fundamental rights to self-determination for the people of West Papua. The truth surrounding the so-called Act of Free Choice must be exposed to the Melanesian sisters and brothers of West Papua and the rest of the international community. Saddest of all is General Assembly resolution 2504 (XXIV) of 1969, concerning West Papua. How can the United Nations continue to ignore the cries of over 3 million people demanding justice? As world leaders, we have time and again expressed serious concerns and dissatisfaction about the fact that certain decisions and actions by the United Nations or its bodies were not consistent with the purposes and intentions of the Charter. However, in the case of West Papua, absolutely nothing has been done to rectify the gross violation of internationally accepted practice. It is therefore our joint responsibility to address this grey area of history.

The continuing disputes and concerns raised with regard to the legality of United Nations-endorsed instruments that have been concluded throughout the years — such as the New York Agreement of 1962, to govern the United Nations administration of the so-called Act of Free Choice in West Papua — is a clear example challenging the integrity and validity of United Nations resolutions at that time. In our opinion, the United Nations-conducted exercises were a total farce conditioned only to suit the geopolitical climate of that period. The United Nations cannot, and must not, continue to turn a blind eye to its own past failures. It is morally, politically and legally wrong to do so. The Netherlands in particular, which was the former colonial authority, should also recognize that it should shoulder some responsibility in helping to resolve the unfortunate situation of West Papua in a peaceful and transparent manner. Why is no one accountable for those unjust decisions affecting the lives of millions of people today?

Vanuatu therefore calls for the establishment of a special commission of inquiry to review the United Nations conduct in relation to the 1969 Act. We also call for the United Nations to send a fact-finding mission to examine the situation in West Papua with regard to human rights abuses and other related issues. And we call for the reinscription of West Papua on the

list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Those are critically challenging responsibilities.

On a final matter, my delegation strongly reaffirms its support for resolution 2758 (XXVI), which was adopted during the twenty-sixth session, in 1971, and which recognized the legal and political representation of the People's Republic of China as a Member of the United Nations. Vanuatu again reiterates its unwavering support for one China and urges all members of the United Nations to work in the interests of world peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

In conclusion, I must bring to the attention of the Assembly another priority issue that is of grave importance to my Government and nation. I would once again like to raise the matter of the relocation of the Pacific Operations Centre of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) from Vanuatu to another location. My Government was not properly consulted in that regard, and requests that the decision to relocate the Centre from Vanuatu be reconsidered. If the Centre's relevance in the region is being questioned, then my Government would propose that a proper review be carried out with a view to restructuring the ESCAP office in order to relocate the Pacific Operations Centre to Bangkok. Programmes and activities under ESCAP responsibility may be better coordinated through the United Nations Development Programme activities in the region.

I hope that wisdom will prevail as the debate continues on our future destiny. Despite all our differences and diversity, human security for all is our main goal. That should remain the focus of the United Nations agenda. The cardinal question is whether Members will allow the United Nations to undertake serious reforms in meeting the challenges ahead. The future remains in our hands.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. François-Xavier Ngoubeyou, Minister of State in Charge of External Relations of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Ngoubeyou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): On 10 June 2004, you, Mr. President, were elected to serve as President of the General Assembly. As you begin your term of office, I have the great pleasure of conveying to you the warm and fraternal congratulations of the people of Cameroon — brother, neighbour and friend of your country, Gabon — as well as from Cameroon's Government and its President, Mr. Paul Biya. Your election crowns an outstanding career and is a tribute to Gabon's diplomacy under the wise guidance of President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba.

Cameroon would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We would like to reiterate our full cooperation to you, Mr. President, and to say that we are at your disposal. In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the important work he accomplished with the tireless support of the Bureau, including in particular with regard to our common endeavour to reform the Organization and enhance its effectiveness by, among other things, reviewing the General Assembly's methods of work.

The waning year has strengthened our common resolve to strengthen multilateralism and to give it prominence in the management of international affairs in the new international order, with the United Nations as the foundation and framework of that order. Despite the ups and downs that the United Nations has experienced, in particular in the Security Council, it is time for there to be an active dialogue among the world's nations, all of which adhere to the universality of the Organization and its unique and irreplaceable role in promoting economic and social development and international peace and security. The world of course faces numerous challenges, some of which are new in nature. Others, however, although older and better known, remain without real solutions — either due to their complexity or because of a lack of determination on the part of the international community to mobilize ways and means commensurate with the stakes.

In January 2005, the General Assembly will receive a report from the Panel of eminent persons appointed by the Secretary-General to reflect on reforms that could make the Organization more effective, transparent and democratic, as well as better able to carry out its mission and tackle the new challenges requiring our attention. I trust that the Panel will not fail to rely upon previous relevant proposals when framing its recommendations, in particular those made at the Millennium Summit. As far as Cameroon is concerned, mankind must be at the heart of any substantive reform of the United Nations.

My country continues to promote the proposal put forth here in New York during the Millennium Summit by President Paul Biya. That proposal called for the creation within the Secretariat of an

international ethics-monitoring centre entrusted with the task of "promoting fundamental and universal human values between and within nations". (*A/55/PV.5, p. 27*)

In addition, it also seems that the time has come for the General Assembly to express its views on the issue of Security Council reform, and in particular with regard to expanding its membership. The proposals that have been introduced in the General Assembly are undoubtedly a very good basis for discussion. The Assembly will recall that the Organization of African Unity called for a reconstituted Security Council that included seven seats for Africa, including 2 permanent seats. That proposal, which Cameroon fully endorses, still stands. Nevertheless, we must forge concrete consensus without delay, as an indicator of greater transparency and renewed legitimacy of a Security Council that is more effective and credible.

Standing side-by-side with other nations, Cameroon is resolutely committed to eradicating new threats that seriously imperil international peace and security. We unreservedly condemn international terrorism and all forms of fundamentalism and extremism, which provide it with both a breeding ground and a vehicle. It is for that reason that we reiterate our solidarity with all those who have fallen victim to terrorism, most recently in Russia and the Middle East.

The efforts undertaken by the Security Council in that regard are encouraging. However, we believe that the time has come for worldwide globalization and the summit level. It is time to act together against the terrorist hydra. Cameroon once again suggests that a high-level conference be urgently convened to define collectively more effective strategies to combat terrorism.

The new threats confronting the world are real challenges, and it is only right that they be given certain priority. That approach will be quite appropriate as the Organization's other traditional concerns continue to enjoy our full attention. Cameroon believes that nothing can justify terrorism. Nevertheless, the response to terrorism and to other new threats cannot be solely a military response.

The modern world must focus on the causes of violence and on the injustices that undermine international peace. Resolving regional conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere; combating poverty and mobilizing against great epidemics, and against HIV/AIDS in particular; redressing the imbalance in world trade in goods and services; and addressing the foreign debt of poor countries — like the new threats, all these challenges require the Organization's attention.

I mention this parallel because we run a real risk, today, of getting used to the endemic poverty that kills thousands every day, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Solidarity with the poor must become a very concrete reality rather than mere lip service. In order to combat hunger and poverty, we need massive private and public financing. We need relief from the burden of debt.

The world today is faced with a paradox. The poorest countries are the ones that have the most open and liberal economies. Even their non-commercial sector has been privatized, causing unemployment for millions of citizens and the destabilization of basic social sectors, such as water and electricity, for many years, with harmful consequences for all economic activity. The current economic order, if we are not careful, could consolidate — and indeed make permanent — current relations based on force, to the benefit of rich countries and to the detriment of poor countries. The rich can easily subsidize their agriculture, their industry and their airlines, among other sectors. The poor countries, however, under the watchful eyes of financial institutions in which their voices go unheard, must submit themselves to the law of the market. Cotton from West and Central Africa is a perfect example of unbalanced and unfair globalization. We should not become discouraged, however, and Cameroon is convinced that under your presidency, Sir, the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly will adopt strong initiatives to help poor countries and to ensure a readjustment of globalization, making it more equitable and beneficial to all. International economic relations must be profoundly reformed with a view to ensuring greater United Nations involvement.

The same issues that apply to the economy also apply to the subject of health. The world, viewed in its entirety, is rich. It has the means of providing adequate health for all. Medicines exist that should make it possible to contain the major pandemics. Research scientists and the pharmaceutical industry are making great strides on a daily basis in combating malaria, tuberculosis, meningitis and cholera, among other diseases. Those scourges, however, kill millions of Africans every year. The reason for this is poverty and insufficient means to obtain care and medicines.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, which is far more terrible since it is thus far incurable, we welcome the fact that scientific research today is making it possible to drastically diminish its devastating scope. The Bangkok International AIDS Conference has certainly given reason for hope. Significant pledges to help eradicate this scourge are announced on a daily basis. Unfortunately, most of the persons infected by the HIV virus are unable to obtain anti-retroviral medications since they lack the necessary financial means. Combating AIDS is a worldwide cause, rallying us all.

I have touched upon regional conflicts. Their negative impact on the international environment, whether politically, economically or in humanitarian and security terms, requires no further demonstration. Africa, as if not already handicapped enough, is the continent most plagued by conflict, as evidenced by the Security Council agenda.

The situation in some countries gives rise to relative optimism. Developments in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and the Comoros give us reasons for hope. Recent firm commitments by political actors in the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire doubtless give rise to better prospects for that fraternal, friendly country.

In Central Africa, despite some improvement, the situation remains worrisome. It calls for constant vigilance and increased involvement on all levels by the international community. In this respect, the international conference on the Great Lakes region, which has been announced several times but has always been deferred, must finally be held as scheduled in November 2004. That will make it possible to lay a fresh foundation for constructive cooperation among the countries of the region, consistent with the interests of their respective peoples.

Still with regard to Central Africa, it is our hope that, at this session, the debate on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) will address the concerns expressed by our subregion's heads of State to the Secretary-General's multidisciplinary assessment mission to Central Africa. I recall here that the heads of State had unanimously and firmly expressed a desire for a political presence by the Secretary-General in Central Africa through a permanent subregional structure. We take note of the statement made here in this connection by the delegation of the Republic of the Congo, as Chairman of ECCAS.

The crisis in Darfur is currently a matter of grave concern on our continent. Wishing to prevent a catastrophe such as has occurred in the past, the African Union has squarely embraced this question with the decisive support of the Security Council and other international partners. We all hope a positive solution will be reached quickly. In order to do this, dialogue must be ongoing, forward-looking and voluntary on the part of all protagonists in the crisis. To be sure, the political will and determination of the Sudanese authorities are key; they must continue to display these qualities. That is the only way that an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe will be avoided. In any case, the international community must be further mobilized behind the African Union in order to ward off this curse and avert this major crisis without delay.

My country is profoundly devoted to peace. It will spare no effort to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes. In that connection, it will continue to promote peace throughout the world, and specifically in Africa, in Central Africa and in the Gulf of Guinea.

As members know, the International Court of Justice in The Hague, after lengthy deliberations lasting almost 10 years, handed down its judgment, on 10 October 2002, relating to the boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria. Both countries, within the context of the Joint Commission established by the Secretary-General and chaired by his Special Representative, have agreed to define the ways and means of implementing that judgment and have adopted a programme of work with a specific timetable, approved on 31 January 2004 by their heads of State and the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General has eloquently reported on the progress that has been made in this connection. We call upon the United Nations family to give its full support to the Secretary-General and to use its influence to help Nigeria and Cameroon in implementing the judgment of the International Court of Justice.

Whether it be the reform of our Organization to make it more efficient, democratic and legitimate; or the Middle East peace process to re-launch the road map; or pacification, reconstruction, enhanced security and institution-building in Iraq and Afghanistan; or the settlement of African disputes and the post-conflict reconstruction of such countries; or combating AIDS and other pandemics; or adjusting financial and trade mechanisms to help the weakest and most exposed countries; or, finally, eliminating poverty: Mr. President, our dear brother, we think that you have a full plate. Quite fortunately, your great qualities will

allow you to involve the international community in working on these problems.

Moreover, you have at your side the Secretary-General of our Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, whose actions and commitments to promote peace, security and development today serve as both a lever and an engine for the activities undertaken by the international community as a whole. You also have at your side, I am sure, the entirety of the United Nations membership. Cameroon, for its part, will spare no effort to support you in your lofty mission.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Tom Butime, acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Butime (Uganda): On behalf of my delegation, the people of Uganda, and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Jean Ping, from the sister African Republic of Gabon, upon your election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I have every confidence in your stewardship in steering the session to a successful conclusion.

I thank the Secretary-General for his excellent leadership, especially during these trying times for the United Nations. I note with satisfaction that, after a year in which the centrality of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security has come under serious challenge, there seems to be a return to the more widely accepted multilateral approach to resolving global challenges.

Terrorism continues to be one of the biggest threats to international peace and security. Since 11 September 2001, thousands of innocent people, including women and children, have been killed or maimed as a result of indiscriminate terrorist acts. This year, the world has witnessed many innocent civilians massacred in cold blood, hostages beheaded in the most barbaric manner, children mutilated by suicide bombers and terrorist groups, very often in the name of extremist and misguided causes and ideologies. Whether it is the recent appalling attack on school children in the Russian town of Beslan, or the massacre of civilians in Balonyo in northern Uganda, the intention of terrorists is the same: to undermine and divide our societies, overthrow elected Governments, and to strike at the heart of international peace and stability.

The Uganda delegation condemns those terrorist acts in the strongest terms. We do not accept that any cause, however genuine, warrants the indiscriminate destruction of human life or property.

In Uganda, we have been fighting against a terrorist organization known as the Lord's Resistance Army, based in southern Sudan. That organization has killed, maimed and abducted tens of thousands of Ugandan children in the northern part of Uganda. The acts of plunder and destruction by those criminals have laid to waste entire villages and driven helpless villagers into camps for internally displaced persons. The Government of Uganda is sparing no effort, with the cooperation of the Government of Sudan, to end that situation and restore peace and stability in this area. We are confident that soon the remnants of those terrorists will have been eliminated or captured. Despite amnesty legislation and a standing offer of pardon by our President, very few have responded. However, recently some improvement in reporting has been observed.

Uganda welcomes the recent restoration of sovereignty to the Iraqi people. We call upon the United Nations, in particular, and the international community as a whole, to do everything possible to assist the interim Government in the rehabilitation of Iraq and re-establishment of the physical and political infrastructure to allow the holding of scheduled elections in that country.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine, often driven by rigid positions, continues to pose a serious threat to peace and stability in the Middle East. Uganda supports the Quartet-led road map for a comprehensive peaceful settlement in the Middle East. We support the establishment of a Palestinian State existing side-by-side and in peace with Israel within secure and recognized borders, in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

After more than 50 years of violence and bloodshed, both the Israelis and Palestinians must rethink their positions. New, creative approaches to a comprehensive peace should therefore be sought for the sake of their peoples. Every year we adopt resolutions which remain mere paper. Resolutions are not solutions in themselves; it is high time we engaged constructively in the serious search for a solution, for the future of humanity and the Middle East.

Turning to the Great Lakes region, we note with satisfaction the positive developments with regard to the peace processes in various conflict situations. In

Burundi, the transitional Government has been consolidated with almost all the fighting groups subscribing to the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. We call upon the groups still remaining outside the peace settlement to cease their military operations and join the peace process. We congratulate the African peace mission for its contribution to the peace process and we welcome the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers to Burundi. Election dates may change, but the elections must be held sooner or later. Elections, a new Government and good proposals relating to the question of representation — all must work for peace for Burundi. It is therefore important that the international community extend the necessary assistance for the consolidation of peace, stability, rehabilitation and development of Burundi.

Uganda remains committed to supporting the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). We urge all parties in the Government of National Unity in Kinshasa to remain committed to the Pretoria Peace Agreement and to resist any temptation to resume hostilities. We also call upon the Security Council to strengthen the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) under Chapter VII of the Charter to consolidate its peacekeeping operations. A robust MONUC force would be critical for the enforcement of Security Council resolution 1493 (2003) on the arms embargo against militias, as well as the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration of all armed rebel groups and militias operating on the territory of the DRC. That would also serve to reduce, and hopefully to eliminate, inter-ethnic clashes in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and help to reassure neighbouring countries about cross-border security. It may also be important to include other legitimate groups in the Government of National Unity and Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to enhance peace. We believe that before democratic elections are held it is important to create a consensus for peace and security.

Uganda believes that as a result of the positive achievements in the peace processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo there is an urgent need to convene the international conference on the Great Lakes region under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union. The conference, which is scheduled to take place in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, in November 2004, will bring together a core group of the Great Lakes countries and the neighbouring countries affected by the conflicts or those that, by infection, contribute to them.

In order to consolidate the peace efforts, we hope that the Great Lakes regional conference will involve all stakeholders in the development of a strategic plan of action on the key issues, including regional peace and security, development, post-conflict reconstruction and regional integration in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). I am glad to note that countries of the Great Lakes region, including Uganda, have already embarked on a preparatory process for the conference involving youth and women's groups, non-governmental organizations and local government officials from all border districts. We believe that this inclusive process will ensure national ownership and commitment to the implementation of the recommendations of the conference.

The delegation of Uganda welcomes the peace accords recently signed in Nairobi between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Liberation Army (SPLM/A). We hope that those accords will lead to the end of the long-running conflict, which has caused untold suffering to the people of the southern Sudan and led to insecurity in neighbouring countries — particularly my own, Uganda. With the return of peace and stability in the southern Sudan, we are confident that we will be able to bring to an end the Lord's Resistance Army attacks against our people in the northern part of Uganda.

My country is an active participant in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development initiative that has brought the various factions in Somalia together to the negotiating table to end the conflict in that country. We note with great satisfaction the progress that has so far been made, and we salute the people of Somalia for coming together to establish a Parliament embracing all groups.

In 2005 the United Nations will observe the fifth anniversary of the Millennium Summit, where we pledged our political will and commitment to a number of Millennium Development Goals, including the reduction of poverty by 50 per cent by 2015. It is, therefore, of great concern that in many parts of Africa poverty levels are rising as per capita incomes continue to decline and that infant and maternal mortality rates are on the increase, while official development assistance commitments remain unfulfilled.

In order to make progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and ensuring the equitable sharing of the benefits of globalization, the General Assembly should focus on the following, inter alia: effective follow-up to and implementation of the various plans of action, declarations and strategies relating to the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation on sustainable development, the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and the Almaty Programme of Action on landlocked developing countries; restructuring of the global trading system, especially in agriculture, mode 4 trade in services and increasing value-added export products from the developing countries; mobilization of adequate resources to fight malaria, tuberculosis and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, covering prevention, care and research and development to ensure the provision of cheaper and more effective drugs and possibly the discovery of an HIV/AIDS vaccine; strengthening of South-South cooperation, including measures by the more advanced developing countries to open their markets to products from the least developed countries; and stronger international support for NEPAD, which reflects Africa's priorities to address development, governance and the security challenges facing the continent. Critical support areas will include market access, measures to encourage increased foreign direct investment in African countries, higher levels of official development assistance for infrastructure and human resources development, ensuring sustainable debt levels, regional integration, enhancement of the African Union's capacity to deal with conflict situations and implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism.

As the United Nations approaches its sixtieth birthday in 2005, the need for revitalization of the General Assembly and restructuring of the Security Council has never been greater. The need for reform of the United Nations is imperative if we want to enhance the role of the Organization and the effectiveness of multilateralism to address emerging hard threats such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and genocide, as well as other challenges, such as persistent poverty and HIV/AIDS. It is therefore fitting that the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will be discussed in 2005.

With regard to reform of the Security Council, the restructuring should reflect the need for democratization and ensuring a balanced and equitable geographical representation. We believe that Africa should be allocated no less than two permanent and five non-permanent seats in the expanded Security Council.

In summary, Uganda is calling for stronger collective action against international terrorism and support for the post-conflict rehabilitation and development programme in northern Uganda. We have noted the positive developments in the Great Lakes region and stressed the importance of convening the international conference on the Great Lakes region in Dar es Salaam in November 2004. We have highlighted the significance of 2005 — as the both the sixtieth birthday of the United Nations and the fifth anniversary of the Millennium Summit — as a key time to focus on meeting the Millennium Development Goals and the revitalization and restructuring of the United Nations to enhance the role of the Organization and to ensure the effectiveness of collective multilateral action.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

A number of representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind Members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): At the 13th meeting the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia has accused the Government of Eritrea of endangering the peace process because it refused to enter into a dialogue with his Government to discuss the revision of the final and binding decision of the Eritrea/Ethiopia Boundary Commission. That is no surprise to Eritreans, who have, by now, become accustomed to such Orwellian subterfuge and doublespeak. The Foreign Minister of Ethiopia is pinning hope on the international community's not being fully aware of the full extent of the contents of the Algiers Agreements, the mandate and decisions of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) and the numerous resolutions of the Security Council.

The peace process has, in fact, been endangered by his Government's rejection of the final and binding decision of the EEBC and its refusal to pay heed to the Security Council's repeated calls for his country's compliance with the decision and for its cooperation with the Commission so as to expeditiously finalize the demarcation process, which is the cornerstone of the Algiers Agreements.

I would like to refer to some of the issues raised by the Foreign Minister and clarify them for the record and in the interests of truth — a truth that the rest of the world recognizes.

First, the Foreign Minister declared that

> "it has become difficult for Ethiopia and Eritrea to formally complete the peace process because of complications that have been created in connection with the implementation of some aspects of the decision of the Eritrea/Ethiopia Boundary Commission".

It should be clear to all that the sole complication in the peace process arises from Ethiopia's rejection of the final and binding decision of the Commission and its refusal to cooperate with the EEBC in the expeditious demarcation of the border, in spite of numerous Security Council resolutions and declarations by the European Union and others.

In paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 1560 (2004), dated 14 September 2004, the Council

> "Urges Ethiopia to show the political will to reaffirm unequivocally its acceptance of the Boundary Commission's decision, and take the necessary steps to enable the Commission to demarcate the border without further delay".

In a declaration made on 17 September 2004, the European Union

> "urges Ethiopia to abide by the Boundary Commission's decision, as agreed in the Algiers Peace Agreement and to fully cooperate with the Boundary Commission in the implementation of the decision."

I also remind His Excellency the Foreign Minister that, in April 2002, he himself declared that

> "According to the Algiers peace deal, both parties should accept the decision of the Boundary Commission as final and binding with no right to appeal".

In this connection, the Eritrean delegation emphasizes that there is no other alternative to the implementation, in good faith, of the final and binding decision of the Commission, because any such attempt would violate the provisions of the Algiers Agreements and international law.

Secondly, the Foreign Minister has declared that the decisions of the EEBC were only "observations". This, again, is at variance with article 4 (2) of the Algiers Agreement of 12 December 2000, which empowers the Commission to delimit and demarcate the colonial treaty borders and to make decisions — not observations. He claims that the implementation of some aspects of the "observations" of the Boundary Commission on demarcation are not in the interests of peace between the two countries and will not advance the major objective of the Algiers Agreements.

The Eritrean delegation submits that peace — just peace — is guaranteed only when it is based on the rule of law, the sanctity of court decisions and respect for the Charter. Any other arrangements based on the law of the jungle would be a root cause of conflict, insecurity and instability. Ethiopia's insistence on an "open-ended dialogue" on the boundary demarcation is certain to lead to conflict. The Foreign Minister is in fact reiterating the position of his Prime Minister, who, on 19 September 2003, declared that the Algiers Agreements should be replaced by an alternative mechanism.

Thirdly, at the 13th meeting the Foreign Minister claims that

> "Nowhere in the whole text of the Agreement of December 2000 is provision made for any entity ... to enforce a court decision".

According to preambular paragraph 3 of that Agreement, the parties recommit "themselves to the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, signed in Algiers on 18 June 2000". Article 1 (2) of the same Agreement states that "The parties shall respect and fully implement the provisions of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities".

Paragraph 14 of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities states that the

> "OAU and the United Nations commit themselves to guarantee the respect for this commitment of the two parties until the determination of the common border",

and stipulates that the guarantee shall comprise

> "Measures to be taken by the international community should one or both of the parties violate this commitment, including appropriate measures to be taken under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter by the United Nations Security Council".

Nothing could be clearer than that. Yet, incredible as it may seem, the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia this morning accused Eritrea of "misleading the

international community". Who is doing what? The Foreign Minster seems to be confident enough to declare sanctions "unlikely to happen" because of assurances he may have received from certain quarters.

Fourthly, he stated that "Achieving peace and implementing the demarcation of the common boundary between the two countries is primarily the responsibility of Ethiopia and Eritrea". We agree. Yet this is a far cry from being solely the responsibility of the two countries. The United Nations and the African Union are guarantors of the Algiers Agreements, which, incidentally, are referred to in the Security Council's most recent resolution on the subject — resolution 1531 (2004) — as including the 12 December 2000 Agreement and the 18 June 2000 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (S/2000/1183 and S/2000/601).

As guarantors, they become parties to the treaty, and as parties to the treaty they have obligations to ensure the implementation of the agreements and compliance by the parties by, inter alia, applying sanctions under Chapter VII.

During the past 12 months, Ethiopia has been systematic in its subversion of international law and the accepted norms of international behaviour. The people and the Government of Eritrea would like to inform the Assembly that Ethiopia's unrestrained assault on the rule of law, including international law, and the sanctity of treaty agreements will not be limited in their ill effects to the well-being of the States and the peoples of our two countries and our region only. Lawlessness is a highly contagious virus, and it spreads far and wide at great speed. Nor do its destructive consequences recognize boundaries.

Ethiopia's attitude of intransigence and bellicosity is encouraged and sustained by the reluctance of the international community to enforce international law. The United Nations and the African Union, in particular, as well as the European Union and the Government of the United States, which are, respectively, guarantors and witnesses of the Algiers Agreements, must shoulder additional political and moral responsibility. The Algiers Agreements are clear in their provisions, which prescribe sanctions against the party that reneges on its commitment. In fact, Ethiopia had made repeated references to that provision —

The President (*spoke in French*): I am sorry to have to interrupt the representative of Eritrea, but the 10-minute limit has now been exceeded. I would ask him to conclude his statement.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): The light was green; I was going by the green light.

In any case, I have reached the concluding part of my statement. Eritrea's commitment to peace is clear and unqualified. Since the beginning of the conflict, the Eritrean Government has done what it could to resolve all contentious issues by peaceful means — including the issue of the location of the village of Badme, which was the casus belli — through dialogue or through a legal mechanism. The Government of Ethiopia refuses to even consider any such initiative. Eritreans are still committed to peace, peace with justice, peace based on the rule of law and the decision of the arbitration commission. They have never threatened and are not now threatening or sabre-rattling with a view to blackmailing the international community to assume policies of appeasement. They have at all times kept their word and honoured their undertakings. They shall continue to do so.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Komar (Indonesia): My delegation begs your indulgence to take the floor to exercise its right of reply, particularly with reference to the earlier statement by the delegation of Vanuatu.

In its earlier intervention, the delegation of Vanuatu once again and incorrectly raised the status of West Papua, which is unquestionably an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia. The legal status of the province of West Papua was resolved and recognized by the international community decades ago. It is, indeed, our common obligation to consistently uphold the General Assembly's decision rather than question the unquestionable. Therefore, my delegation strongly rejects the reference made by the delegation of Vanuatu.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.